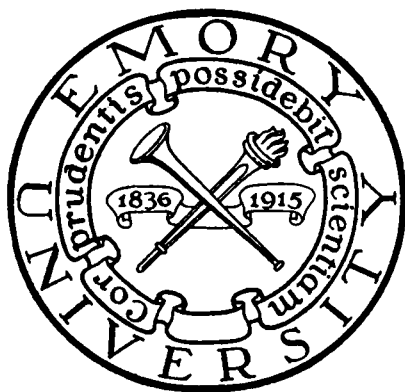


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RALPH RUTHERFORD.

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VOL. I.

RALPH RUTHERFORD.

A NAUTICAL ROMANCE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE PETREL,"

&c., &c.

"Safe am I arrived in haven, a weather-beaten but experienced shipman, enabled to indicate the hidden rocks and quicksands of this life's perturbed shores. Often have I struck, often been wrecked, but never foundered. Possible, though little probable, are future storms."

MEMOIRS OF BARON FREDERIC TRENCK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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RALPH RUTHERFORD.

CHAPTER I.

THE wars which so unhappily raged almost without intermission from 1793 to 1814, fell with peculiar violence upon the European colonies in the West Indies. The bright Caribbean Sea, studded as it is with rich and lovely islands, became throughout its whole length and breadth one vast theatre for desultory and destructive combats, the objects, and still more frequently the results of which were too often lamentably trivial, in compari-

son with the blood shed in them, and the misery inflicted by them.

But such contests, independently of mere worldly temptations, offered a wide field for the display of individual skill and gallantry, and they were of course eagerly sought.

Amongst the smaller expeditions or raids of the time, few proved more fertile in opportunities of acquiring personal distinction than did an unsuccessful attack upon ——, with an inadequate force, in 18——, where, after having stormed Fort——, the British seamen and marines, particularly those stationed in the advanced batteries, maintained an unequal conflict with the superior forces of a brave and resolute enemy for more than twenty successive days, led on by two distinguished young naval officers and a gallant officer of Marines, all three subsequently designated as *fire-eaters*—a distinction then well-known, and highly appreciated, for it was beyond the desecrating hand of favour.

During this sanguinary struggle, so obsti-

nately maintained day after day, and especially in that desperate crisis of the affair when an overwhelming body of the enemy rushed down with fierce shouts upon the select few who were undauntedly covering the rear of our shattered little force, and protecting their re-embarkation, Ralph Rutherford, who had recently arrived from England to join the flag-ship as a midshipman, repeatedly elicited the cheers of his gallant comrades, and the marked approbation of his chivalrous leader, by a display of calm, judicious courage, ever skilfully adapted to the exigency of the moment, amidst a continually increasing complication of difficulties and dangers.

“Rutherford,” said the officer who had been Ralph’s immediate commandant upon this occasion, when the remains of the party had been once more assembled, “to earn distinction amongst such men as those who now surround us is no child’s play; I shall report my view of your conduct to the Admiral.”

Ralph Rutherford's heart beat proudly, for he saw with especial gratification that his most eager competitors for distinction acquiesced cordially in this public address to him from one whose approbation upon such a subject was in itself a high honour : he was a man of few words and chivalrous deeds.

Speak, Ralph could not ; but the flushed cheek and flashing eye gave a more animated response than that which his faltering tongue refused to utter.

And that young commandant, whose approbation was so precious, not long since at an advanced age, and with exalted rank, closed a brilliant career of noble daring and boundless generosity by a course of piety, humility, and charity rarely equalled. His pure and lofty patriotism had never been sullied by one selfish thought. During many dark and dreary years, unblessed by domestic solace, he endured from his ghastly and incurable wounds, and without a murmur, sufferings and infirmities which it was pain-

ful to contemplate. But this truly Christian hero knew where to seek for support in affliction; and to his latest breath his thoughts were more occupied with the sufferings of others than with his own.

Such a digression, induced by accidental allusion to scenes in which this lamented friend bore a conspicuous part, may serve to direct the attention of the nobler-minded of our youthful aspirants to the edifying example of a glorious naval life, closed by a death far more glorious.

The number of casualties in these and many more important expeditions, with the fevers incidental to the climate, which were greatly aggravated, and often rendered fatal, by the fatigues and privations inseparable from such services, that were often performed in most unhealthy localities, and were too often aided by reckless individual imprudence, led to a constant demand upon the mother country for officers of the junior grades, who were continually arriving in the

West Indies to grasp at such tempting, but often delusive, prospects of promotion.

Some of the new-comers, like Rutherford, had been sent from head-quarters at home to receive the recompense of services already rendered ; but of course the greater number came recommended by powerful interest. Some few of them were fortunate youths, blessed with noble birth or high connections, and these appeared to consider rapid promotion as their birthright ; but they were quite as prompt to face danger or privation, as their less-favoured or plebeian companions,—which in a great degree extracted the sting from the openly avowed partiality in promotion—an abuse, moreover, too perfectly established and of too long standing to excite much comment or observation.

This last sharp affair at —— had been of course canvassed in the squadron ; and Ralph's share in it proved a very favourable introduction to his new associates, the midshipmen of the flag-ship, who were about

twenty in number, most of them between seventeen and twenty years of age, though some few who had entered the service late, were much older. All those who had served six years were candidates for promotion; the prospect of vacancies, therefore, and the probable disposal of them, was frequently the subject of earnest debate in the berth; but there had lately arisen a question, which for the moment excited a still more lively interest.

It had been proposed to purchase a handsome outfit, and to adopt a comparatively sumptuous style of living, in imitation of a military mess, with all the dignity of Lafitte and Champagne.

“Midshipmen,” argued the leading advocate for this new order of things (an uneducated and unpolished youth, who had made much prize money), “are officers and gentlemen; but it is only by living as such, that we can maintain our consequence, and the credit of the ship.”

This proposal, which had often been mooted, though never before so distinctly proposed to the assembled mess, although by no means unanimously approved, was vehemently applauded by a considerable number, and coldly acquiesced in by a majority of those present. Some who could afford it, really wished it, whilst many without permanent means for meeting such an expense, acquiesced because they had prize-money enough to support it for the present, and trusted to chance for the future. Amongst those who were most averse to the arrangement, no one would incur the risk of being thought poor or mean, though some ventured to oppose it upon other grounds.

Two or three of the most able and influential men took no part in the debate, but looked ominously grave, to the great discomposure of its zealous advocates.

“Rutherford,” said Lord George Carleton, a fine manly youth, “do give us your opinion. I should like to see such a table

kept, as I could ask my shore friends to, as at a regimental mess, though I would not wish to inconvenience others. What say you to it ?”

Urged upon all sides for his opinion, Ralph at length said :

“I do not think that an expensive mess would confer credit upon us, or upon our ship, were it possible to maintain it, which is not the case. Many of us who find a difficulty in supporting the expense of a mess, consistent with our pay, and adapted to the rules and regulations of the service, must either withdraw from it, or involve ourselves in pecuniary difficulties ; in other words, in ruin and degradation. Many a man’s prospects would thus be destroyed, and many a widowed mother’s heart broken.” He spoke with deep feeling, for his own inestimable mother was present to his thoughts. “ And for what ? To attempt a feeble parody of that, which we have neither space nor means to imitate successfully, were it desi-

rable to do so, which it certainly is not. The attempt would prove ruinous to ourselves, and so injurious to the public service, that if we should be weak enough to persist, authority must sooner or later suppress it. I would suggest the general use of moderate-priced wines, to the entire exclusion of spirits, which should never be permitted to enter a midshipman's berth upon any pretext ; and in such a change as that, the authorities could, and no doubt would, materially assist us."

Ralph's opinion was almost unanimously adopted ; for plain good sense, simply and manfully asserted, always carries weight.

Many who would have acquiesced in the extravagance proposed contrary to their own interests and wishes, from false shame, became bold and decided opponents to it under such a leader.

"Well," said Lord George, addressing Ralph with great good-humour, "I may at least claim the merit of being convinced that you are right ; and as you won't per-

mit us to play the fool, and waste our loose cash here, come ashore with us at Port Royal to-night, that we may show you a specimen of West Indian fun and gaiety."

Ralph laughed: he could not but like the frank, gay youth who had so ingenuously and good-humouredly given way to his pleading, and who was indeed a most attractive person.

"Come," resumed Carleton, "you have done good enough to quiet your conscience for one day, and may venture to dissipate a little now; we have a jovial dinner at Suzy Atkins's, with one of your late leaders in the chair, supported by a set of real good fellows. Old Tom will be there, and he is in himself a host; for what between laughing at him, and with him, the fun he produces is inexhaustible; and then the dignity ball afterwards—'twill do your heart good to see it."

Ralph shook his head good-humouredly.

"I can assure you," resumed Carleton,

“we will show you what will astonish one so fresh from the old country. Few ball-rooms can compare with ours for a display of beauty, both of face and form ; and as for grace and elegance, if we cannot boast of the sublime realities, you will at least see the most enchanting caricatures of both that it is possible to imagine.”

“Your description of a dignity ball,” said Ralph laughing, “is sketched with much unction, and is indeed more than sufficiently attractive ; but the mail will start to-morrow, and my letters will occupy me all this evening ; I must therefore beg to be excused, having important business to write about.”

“I am sorry for it,” replied Carleton ; “and the more so, because you would have been sure to meet many of your comrades in your late affair.”

Thus rattled the gay and thoughtless Carleton, who soon after started for the shore with a large and merry party. He was the leader of a wild and rollicking set ; not that

he was more dissipated than the others—less so indeed than most of them—but whilst his title, and his comparatively profuse expenditure, enlisted many of the meaner spirited of his messmates under his banner, his good-humour and buoyant spirits made him a general favourite with such of the better sort as were decidedly social and frolicsome.

“There’s nothing in that fellow Rutherford after all,” squeaked a pale, delicate-looking youth, as he stepped out upon the wharf, on a remarkably slender pair of legs; “he has no taste for a jolly good row—not he.”

The speaker was ever wont to be conspicuous at the commencement, or rather at the provocation of a row, wherever he might be at its close.

“And yet,” added a coarse, stumpy, hard featured toady of the young Lord, “though this Mr. Rutherford gives himself such airs, and must be courted forsooth,

none of us know who he is, nor where he comes from."

"That may be, Tomkins," remarked Carleton, "but we know what he is, and where he came from last, which is more to the purpose. I wish he could have come with us; but it's his loss, for we shall have a regular jolly party."

"Yes," cried another, "if only to fetch up the lee way for that last stupid cruize, where we have been hard worked, and half starved, and did nothing after all."

"Shuldham," said Ralph, as he closed his letters about noon next day; addressing a mild, intellectual looking young man, who had participated in the festivities of the preceding night, and who now sat with his elbows on the mess-table, resting his throbbing temples upon his hands: "you can have no taste for pine-apple punch parties, and dignity balls; why then should you, my good fellow, embark in such destructive follies, merely in imitation of men with

coarser minds and harder heads ? If you really are what I believe you to be, a single effort will extricate you from all this."

Shuldham raised his languid eyes ; his face was deadly pale, but his brow was burning. He offered his fevered hand to Ralph.

"I am to have a cruize in the tender," resumed Ralph, "and will get you named to go with me ; a cruize will soon set you right—no head-aches at sea—you shall cut the dissipation of our friends here at Port Royal. We shall be better employed in looking out for enemy's cruisers : and who knows what luck we may have ?"

Shuldham was really as Ralph had divined—a sensible, well-disposed lad, but he was rather apt to be led away ; and as he could not boast of even the rudiment of a beard, was probably apprehensive that his manhood would be questioned, unless he did as others did ;—a foolish fear which has led thou-

sands into vicious courses, who had no natural propensity to such ways, and only learnt to relish them by practice.

Shuldham accepted this offer with great alacrity; he felt gratified by such a mark of attention from Rutherford, who gifted with a clear head, a strong spirit of self-reliance and self-will, and well-proved courage, with pleasing manners, free from every taint of arrogance or presumption, necessarily had acquired a considerable degree of influence over the better sort of the less powerful minds around him. And this proved an important era in young Shuldham's life, for he was at once rescued from evil example—so fatal to docile youth—and became attached to a friend whose good qualities he was perfectly able to appreciate, and to whom he ever after looked up as a guide.

Two days after this conversation, Rutherford and his young friend sailed upon their cruise in the 'Pickle' tender, with

one gun and twenty men. She was attached to the flag-ship, and manned from her.

There had been a rumour that some of the more turbulent and ill-disposed slaves on estates near to the coast opposite St. Domingo, had held occasional intercourse with the revolted negroes of that island, which in the anarchical state of its barbarous population had become an object of considerable anxiety to the Government. The 'Pickle' had been sent to watch the more secluded parts of the seaboard to prevent all such intercourse.

For two days she had been retarded by calms and variable winds, but on the third morning being abreast of a remote and thinly-peopled district, Ralph hauled his little craft close in with the land whilst it was yet dark, and when the day broke a small light schooner, evidently no trader, was seen lying-to, about two miles ahead of the 'Pickle,' whilst half-way between

the stranger and the tender, rowing towards the former was a long galley, which could only avail herself of a few of her oars, from having goods of some sort piled up most unskilfully in her midships, which, as far as could be judged by the aid of the telescopes, appeared to be plunder hastily thrown together—an appearance sufficiently alarming.

“This looks like mischief,” said Rutherford; “fire a shot over the boat.”

No notice having been taken of the first shot, a second was fired *at* her, and as it fell close under the boat’s stern she brought to, or rather the rowers dropped their oars and concealed themselves; but as the tender was becalmed she continued to fire, till the boat’s-crew alarmed, resumed their oars and rowed their boat awkwardly, slowly, and unwillingly alongside the ‘Pickle.’

The strange schooner meantime, which was out of gun-shot, had shown no colours;

but having retained the breeze, had made all sail, and steering for St. Domingo, was rapidly increasing her distance from the ‘Pickle,’ as she still lay becalmed.

CHAPTER II.

MR. CARTERET, of Mount Ceniz, an eminent planter in Jamaica, having occasion to visit a small estate on the sea-coast, where he had built what in India would be called a bungalow, which afforded tolerable accommodation for his family when business, or a wish to enjoy the cool, fresh sea-breezes of the Retreat—for so was this pleasant cottage named—induced him to leave, for a time, his commodious family-mansion in the mountains, had set out upon one of these not unfrequent excursions, taking with him his daughters, Julia and Laura, seventeen and sixteen years of age.

Mrs. Carteret, who was a tall, thin, stiff, impracticable person, indifferent to everybody and everything, but her own indulgences and caprices; occupied with her own ailments, real or imaginary, and very indolent, had declined to accompany the party, as she had frequently done of late, pleading that the exertion was too much for her delicate state of health;—being one of those sickly-looking ladies who are always well enough to do anything they may wish to do, but quite incapable of doing anything that does not suit their fancy, however important to their families. Indeed, as this good lady was rarely pleased with anything, and querulously exacted unremitting attention from everybody, neither Mr. Carteret nor his daughters enjoyed their excursion the less that she had refused to be one of the party; and as they rarely stayed at the Retreat more than a few days, the attendance of their faithful old nurse Jemima was considered to be quite sufficient.

The little party started long before sunrise

on a fine morning, and in great glee. Nowhere is a short journey accomplished with more ease and pleasure, than amongst their native hills, by the wealthy and often highly-educated landed proprietors of Jamaica, amongst whom strong family attachments, and frank, open-hearted good-will prevail, at least as much as amongst any class of people on earth, cherished and polished by a course of habitual hospitality which, although it may arise in a great degree from causes that can exert no such influence in England, gives a peculiar charm to West Indian society, and exercises a beneficial influence in promoting a spirit of frankness and cordiality in the West Indian social character, very dear to the memory of those who have had the good fortune to enjoy it.

Nowhere is there a more delicious variety of hill and dale, mountain gorge, and rugged precipice, torrent and waterfall, than in the route taken by Mr. Carteret from Mount Cenis to the Retreat, winding round the

more difficult ground. The most gorgeous shrubs, cultivated with so much cost and care in our conservatories and hothouses, with others yet unknown to our gardeners, stood forth here in their own soft climate in their true character, as stately forest-trees, clothed in a fantastic garb of creeping plants ; some of these hanging in light festoons, and glowing with blossoms or berries, intermingled with and relieved by broad sheets of grey and glittering mosses, which flowed, as it were, from amidst the dark foliage ; whilst the larger creepers descended to the ground in twisted, cordage-like masses, large as cables. On the nearer trees, by the way-side, the wide-spreading branches bore an infinite variety of parasitical plants, often of singular, and even grotesque forms, but many of them beautiful. Myriads of bright and noisy birds fluttered and chattered amongst the thick, dark, yet many-shaded sea of leaves ; but it is vain to attempt to convey to our home-bred readers, the beauty of a scene

which must be beheld to be fully appreciated.

Such were the objects which courted their immediate attention as they rode gently on, winding their devious way amongst scattered rocks, and broken ground, garnished with aloe, prickly pear, and other tropical shrubs, of form and growth most strange to European eyes : whilst in the distance, more mighty specimens of tropical growth sprang up from every ravine, their surpassing magnitude escaping the observation of the careless passer-by, because the purity of the atmosphere misled him as to the distances of objects.

“ Julia,” said Mr. Carteret, “ observe that large tree, raising its solitary head from the rich hollow at the foot of yon conspicuous precipice.”

“ I see it,” replied Julia, “ but perceive nothing very remarkable in it : it’s a large tree, but that’s all !”

“ You must see a conspicuous white speck on the top of that tree ; and if you

do, what in your wisdom do you suppose that white speck to be ?”

“ I suppose, my dear father,” said the lively girl, laughing, “ that it is the skeleton of a plump turkey, carried off by some villanous buzzard from your stock-yard, to the great indignation of old Sambo, and devoured at leisure upon that inaccessible perch, the vile marauder rocking himself luxuriously in the cool mountain breeze whilst he enjoyed his repast.”

“ Nay, Julia, my love, you are far from the mark. That white speck is nothing less than the skeleton of an old blind horse, who having fallen over the precipice immediately above it, lodged on the topmost branches of that huge tree, where his weight, or his struggles, making no impression, he became the victim of birds of prey ; and you have mistaken the skeleton of a horse for that of a farm-yard fowl ; nor do I wonder at it, so deceptive is the effect of this pure mountain atmosphere upon our powers of vision.

Julia, I wished to show you how difficult it is in these hills to judge of the size of distant objects, or of distances.”

Thus beguiling the length of their journey, which had gradually become oppressively warm, they at length hailed with delight a view of the sea, with its cool refreshing breeze, equally acceptable to horse and rider; and having arrived at the Retreat, with just such a sense of fatigue as served to enhance the comforts of rest and refreshment, our little party were soon enjoying from the broad latticed verandah, which occupied the whole front of the building, their fondly-cherished view of the dark blue ocean, gently rippled by the breeze, dotted here and there with the white sail of the returning fisherman, or the massive form of the deep-laden drogher, creeping along shore with her heavy cargo—their prospect only bounded by a hazy, indistinct, cloudy appearance, raised far above the natural horizon.

“ May not that be a dim view of those St. Domingo mountains, concerning which we hear such dreadful tales ?” said Laura, shuddering. “ They certainly lie in that direction, Julia.”

“ You are afraid of your own shadow, I believe,” replied her sister ; “ but St. Domingo is far enough from us.”

“ I hope so, Julia, but Jemima was speaking of it, just now : the dear old soul was in one of her superstitious moods, and declared she could not look in that direction without a shudder.”

“ Oh ! yes,” replied Julia, somewhat scornfully, “ Jemima has been out of spirits all day, for whilst we were enjoying the beautiful scenery around us, in our descent from the hills, the poor old creature could see nothing but evil omens. She heard too the scream of that rare bird, which their fetish men tell them always forbodes misfortune ; ’twas enough to alarm one to hear her ; but I have no faith in such nonsense.”

And yet she was not quite so firm as she had professed to be, for Mr. Carteret soon after happening to join them, found her leaning pensively upon the window-ledge with her large, dark, expressive eyes fixed almost apprehensively on the distant horizon.

“What ails thee, my darling?” said the father, as he smoothed down her glossy ringlets.

“I know not,” she replied; “but does not St. Domingo lie upon yonder horizon, and not far off, and what sad tales of rapine and murder have reached us from that ill-fated shore! Jemima was talking of it with alarm in one of her queer fits to-day, and though I laughed at her gloomy fancies, somehow they seem to have affected me also.”

Mr. Carteret smiled at Julia’s momentary alarm, and momentary it was, for frequent and fitful were her changes of mood, though the joyous one largely predominated, and she was soon once more all life and animation.

To the slaves on the estate the arrival of the family was ever more or less a jubilee, bringing them, through their young mistresses, some advantage or indulgence. The negro women hailed their arrival with joy, and the children with screams of delight—for negro joy is ever clamorous. The kind-hearted girls always bestowed much notice on these children, and had their favourites amongst them. No sooner did Julia and Laura, therefore, make their appearance out of doors in the evening, attended by Jemima, than a wild and joyful shout broke forth from the expectant crowd, to announce the important event.

The reader has doubtless seen the rush of barn-door fowls, when the farmer's wife enters their domain at the long-expected hour, holding with both hands her widely distended apron, teeming with bright barley ; such was the rush and the flutter of that whole laughing, chattering bevy of soot-coloured picaninnies, true disciples of

Momus ; their white teeth and eyeballs glittering amongst their shining black faces, whilst their huge, round, woolly heads, mounted guard so strangely over their protuberant bodies, which half concealed their slender, misshapen legs, stuck almost in the middle of a long, thin, uninsteped foot, imparting a most grotesque effect to the broad and merry grin, which literally distended the thick-lipped mouth from ear to ear. But they were beauties in their mother's eyes, and the dark, but often comely matrons watched with delighted looks, each, as her own peculiar darling became the object of momentary notice to Julia or to Laura. The latter was more gentle and more discriminating than her sister, adapting herself more carefully to the habits and feelings of the negroes ; yet both were kind and familiar with the children, and each had brought presents for her favourites.

It would have surprised some of our

worthy out-and-out emancipists, who cannot for a moment divest slavery of the fetter and the lash, to have seen with what evidently accustomed familiarity these dark pickaninnies sported around the fair girls, even clinging to them, and embracing their knees playfully, with uproarious laughter. That these things were so, is unquestionable, and that domestic slaves often led an easy life, indulged even, and pampered is equally so ; yet was it far otherwise with the great body of field-slaves ; and slavery, modify it as you may, is still the horror of horrors, not less a curse to the oppressor than to the oppressed !

Mr. Carteret was a just and a kind master, prudent and vigilant ; still much went on at the Retreat which he knew not, and could not possibly have known.

Night came rapidly as usual with sundown, and all was bright, and calm, and tranquil in an atmosphere laden with rich and spicy odours. Our little group, almost

too indolent to talk, enjoyed the delicious coolness of the air in the broad verandah, sipping the grateful sherbet, icy and fragrant with the fresh lime and other Indian fruits and herbs, mingled with masterly skill ; a light breeze had sprung up to ripple the broad waters murmuring at their feet ; the rays of the descending moon glittered amongst the transparent dew-drops which gemmed the slightly quivering foliage of the more feathery of the plants, whilst in the deeply-shaded spots, the fireflies sported in ever-fluttering myriads, alighting occasionally here and there, and spreading far and near their brilliant though puny splendour.

It was indeed a scene of surpassing loveliness, in full harmony with the feeling of quiet, peaceful happiness which pervaded the hearts of our young girls, as they gazed upon the ever-varying picture ; for the tropical moon, more dazzling than a noon-day's winter sun in northern climes,

slowly descending, in all its unshorn splendour, beneath the unbroken horizon, lighted up the face of the waters gorgeously; and the deepening shadows on the landward side of the groves acquired additional gloom from the streaks and sprays of vivid light, which yet lingered amidst the topmost branches of the loftier trees, pencilling their varied and fantastic outline on the dark blue sky.

It is difficult to quit such soft and soothing scenes, such sweet and balmy air, even to seek that repose which, in so enervating a climate, nature demands after a day of unwonted exertion, however pleasurable; but the faithful Jemima became importunate, and at length she spoke as she was somewhat wont to do, with the voice of authority, till her unwilling charges yielded to her persuasions, and retired languid and fatigued with the pleasures of the past day, fondly anticipating still greater happiness on the morrow.

Mr. Carteret still lingered in the verandah, enjoying his cigar ; his thoughts, hitherto almost exclusively occupied with his young companions, took, in their absence, a more serious turn. He had for some time entertained a design of returning to England—a measure highly desirable on account of his daughters, one of whom was now of an age to be introduced, and he himself, who had been born and educated in England, wished to end his days in the old country, where he had left dear friends and valued connections. Long absence had by no means impaired his attachment to his native land, and though not of a very advanced age, his constitution, never robust, now required a more bracing climate.

Nothing is more easy, and few things are more agreeable, than to form delightful plans for the future, and those who do not see all the complications of the situation of a man known to be wealthy, often wonder why he should hesitate to do that which is

known to be his wish, and seems to be fully within his power.

“I would not stay another day in this country, lovely as it is, and happy as I have been it, especially with those dear girls, if I was as free to return to the old country as Carteret is. His estates are quite clear now.”

Thus spoke Mr. Frampton, a sensible and kind-hearted neighbour, to a common friend, and no doubt many other people had made similar remarks, perhaps with less delicacy ; for we are always wise, and not always courteous, in discussing the affairs of our neighbours, which, however, by no means implies wisdom in the management of our own.

But we have left Mr. Carteret smoking his Havanah thoughtfully, till the end of the cigar approaching the tip of his nose, which was somewhat inconveniently long for his very short face ; he threw it from him,

and having lighted another, began to commune with his thoughts.

They were first directed to the best mode of effecting the sale of his estates, then to the difficulties that lay in the way of obtaining his wife's consent to the necessary arrangements, she having an interest in part of the property ; and, lastly, to the means of procuring the co-operation of his brother Peter, who was in an ill state of health, and fondly attached to Julia.

He threw away the stump of his cigar, clasped his hands behind his back, and paced gently up and down the verandah in deep thought.

At last he offered up a heartfelt prayer, and retired to rest ; but uncle Peter, and the possible evil results which might arise from his injudicious fondness for Julia, somewhat disturbed his slumbers.

Again the morning was delicious, and the master of the house lounged in the verandah,

with his cup of Mocha and his cigar ; the view from it, in its bright dewy morning garb, displaying new forms of loveliness.

Ladies are early risers in the West Indies, and breakfast is happily a social meal. The girls did not keep him long waiting ; and when he afterwards proceeded to transact the business that had brought him to the Retreat, his daughters found ample and interesting occupations : there were shady bowers and tiny waterfalls to visit, the laughing, shouting, todling picaninnies to admire, and other pets to attend to : the heat of the day was given to repose, and at length the evening brought the so-ardently desired excursion upon the sea.

The little ‘Sylph,’ with her white sails and streaming flag, received the joyous party. A gentle breeze, whilst it filled the light, swelling canvas, communicated a grateful gliding motion to the trim craft, and gave to the atmosphere that delicious freshness only to be appreciated by those who have panted

under a vertical sun, or laboured to breathe under the crushing depression of the parching simoon. Fresh cool fruits and iced sherbets awaited their return.

Mr. Carteret had, with some difficulty, completed his business in time to join them in the boat excursion of the evening. He had shaken off, for the time, his anxious thoughts, and having promised his daughters one more day at the Retreat, during which he could attend wholly to them, which would greatly extend their excursions and amusements, he slept profoundly. Even dear old Jemima, in the general happiness, had ceased to forebode evil; and all was peace and calm repose at the Retreat.

CHAPTER III.

AMONGST the objects which had particularly attracted the attention of Julia and Laura, during the afternoon of the preceding day, whilst they had been amusing themselves by watching the movements of the small vessels passing to and fro, a white sail, on the offing, of considerable size, had interested them much. Her tall, taper spars, and ample sails, cut with a graceful sweep, and swelling out to the lightest breeze, indicated swiftness ; but, although ever in move-

ment, she did not appear to advance much in any direction.

“ I verily believe,” said Julia, “ that beautiful vessel is sporting on those gentle waves to amuse us, Laura. One might fancy it contained some knight or necromancer, hovering about us for good or for evil.”

“ He must have excellent eyes to see us,” replied Laura, laughing ; “ but you are wont to dream of lovers in disguise.”

Other objects and subjects soon attracted the ever-varying thoughts of those happy and light-hearted girls. The evening had passed away delightfully ; and the inhabitants of the Retreat were buried in profound repose, when, soon after midnight, they were suddenly seized in their beds, secured, and deprived of all power of giving an alarm. The house was surrounded by armed strangers, who were men of colour. No ponderous bolts or bars precluded invasion, nor was much noise made in forcing an entrance even to the chambers. Shortly afterwards,

the terrified captives found themselves borne somewhat roughly to the beach, and, to their utter consternation, were placed in a large boat, with threats of instant death, should they attempt to give any trouble.

Jemima, who felt all a mother's care for her helpless charge, had clung to them with such desperate pertinacity, that neither threats nor blows availed to drive her from her purpose; and whether the appeal she made to the robbers, in some wild African dialect, prevailed, or by whatever motive moved, one of them took the little old woman up in his arms, and flung her angrily into the boat, to the great consolation of the weeping objects of her affection.

Who shall describe the speechless agony of the unhappy father, torn at once from the summit of earthly happiness—for it appeared by contrast to have been such—and cast into the deepest abyss of misery. His eyes were bandaged, his mouth was stopped; he was half-suffocated; his limbs were cramped with

bonds, and he was rudely handled. Mr. Carteret, however, preserved his presence of mind ; for, in the desperate situation of his children, he forgot his own personal sufferings. The negro French spoken by his captors told him but too plainly that he was in the hands of merciless revolted negroes from St. Domingo, whose object must be to bear him and his ill-fated children to that land of blood and pollution, where the red flag of socialism was in the ascendant.

One only glimmer of hope could he trace. There was amongst that ruffian crew a voice of authority : it spoke a purer language than the others. The person who spoke was no negro ; and villain as he must be—for he was clearly the leader in this outrage—he was a more civilized villain than his fellows. Money might buy him. This was but a slight foundation for hope ; but, in his despair, poor Carteret grasped even at this light straw, and listened intently to every word which fell from that man's lips ; nay,

to every tone and inflection of his voice, and marking the measure of obedience or observance, yielded to it.

The men were clamorous for plunder. A party, it appeared, had been left to pillage the house. He heard a promise given that the boat should return immediately for them : he heard also enough to convince him that the man who assumed authority was a half-educated mulatto—for in these countries residents become very expert in distinguishing castes and classes—and he felt that the firmness and extent of this man's authority was his only security from the last extremity of violence. The blood curdled in his veins when he perceived that it was only by a very cautious course of proceeding that the mulatto contrived to maintain anything like subordination among his associates.

It would seem that the men had very unwillingly left their comrades to the more congenial occupation of ransacking the house, while they carried off the captives, and that

they were very indignant with those who had been left on board the schooner for having permitted her to drift so far from the shore, in the absence of the boat; a circumstance which had greatly increased their labour, and wasted so much valuable time, that it must be late before the boat could return the second time from the shore with the plunder of the house. Throughout these squabbles, their language to their officer was rude and threatening.

At last they reached the schooner. It was dark, and the men were impatient to send the boat back to the shore as quickly as possible. The girls had, with consummate prudence, been wrapped up by Jemima in garments without number; and under these favouring circumstances, aided by the skilful manœuvres of the mulatto captain, the captives were bundled out of the boat, and thrust into the schooner's cabin, roughly and rudely, but safely; whilst the crew were occupied with hurrying away the boat, and wrangling

about the schooner being so far from the shore.

The cabin was a small, low, dismal hole, garnished with arms of all sorts; and there the terrified girls had sobbed themselves into a state of extreme exhaustion, and lay moaning upon a sail, spread upon the cabin deck for them, keeping fast hold of Jemima, as if they thought she could protect them.

Mr. Carteret was now unfettered, Jemima having released him from all his bonds, as they had been left entirely to themselves. He was not a man to waste precious moments in useless manifestations of grief; indeed, every energy of his mind was in full and well-regulated activity.

It had not escaped him when they came on board, that a second person, whose speech proclaimed him no negro, had been personally taken to task by the boat's crew for being so far from the shore; and it was with a throbbing heart he found that, whilst the crew were thus domineering over

their officer, the Captain had not ventured to interfere. This was truly alarming ; but the boat pushed off with only four hands, to return to the shore, and apparently the crew of the schooner retired to rest, for all became quiet and silent on board, the sail flapping dismally against the mast, from time to time. A small lamp hanging near the door of the cabin cast a momentary light upon any one who came in ; but the inner recess, where the trembling, weeping captives lay, was in total darkness. A man had entered the cabin whilst the squabbling on deck had been going on, and had seated himself on the deck close to the door, without speaking, till all was quiet, when he retired, and Carteret satisfied himself, as he passed the lamp, that he also was a mulatto, which rather cheered him, for there were apparently then three mulattos on board. The Captain soon after came in, and immediately addressed his prisoner :

“ Time is precious, Sir,” he said ; “ we

have both much at stake: it is indispensable that you and I should clearly understand each other; my life is in peril as much as yours, and those dearer to you than life—moments even may prove inestimable. I will set you an example of perfect frankness; follow it, or you and yours are lost!”

“Say on,” replied the agitated father; “I am at your mercy; name your terms. You see I comprehend you.”

“’Tis well you do so. I am a desperate man, utterly ruined in the late insurrections in St. Domingo, where I once possessed a prosperous and happy home. I must earn the means of supporting life decently, or perish in the attempt. You clearly comprehend me now?”

“Release us, and I will make you wealthy.”

“Would it were as easy to release you as you seem to suppose; but my authority here is liable to question, or rather, it is liable to

be borne down by brute force. I am almost alone amidst a host of sanguinary ruffians ; yet, if you will swear to pay me ten thousand dollars, if I protect you and your family from personal violence, and ten thousand more if I land you all safe and unharmed in Jamaica, or put you on board an English man-of-war, pledging yourself also to protect me from all consequences, in either case, I am yours to the last drop of my blood. I know more of you than you are aware of, Mr. Carteret, and I will trust you. I am a villain you will say, but I feel for you, and will prove it."

"To your terms I agree without hesitation ; but your authority here is evidently insecure. What are your plans ? what your resources, wherewith to execute them ? for if I and my family should be deceived and betrayed, we may be destroyed ; but vengeance will pursue the traitors, and you must have had accomplices amongst my negroes, who, to save themselves, will denounce you."

“I had but two, who will most probably come off in the boat, so I have nothing to fear there,” said the mulatto, coolly; “but we lose time, and must to business. Our position is desperate, but not hopeless. You see these fire-arms: they are all of excellent quality, loaded, and fit for immediate service, while the few muskets entrusted to our negro crew, are more likely to burst and injure the unskilful scoundrels who may use them, than anybody else. Nor is this all; their powder is bad, and they have not one able or skilful man to lead or guide them; I have taken care of that. Brute force constitutes their only formidable point.”

“But they are numerous, ferocious, and of great bodily strength. Should they seek entrance here, what is to prevent them from breaking in upon us? we have no retreat open.”

The mulatto took down the lamp, and drew Mr. Carteret's attention to the great strength of the bulkhead which separated

the cabin from the open deck ; it had been skilfully constructed, and had been provided quite as much for defence against a mutinous crew, in these disordered times, as against an enemy. The bulkhead was supported on the inner side by stout iron knees, placed at short distances, whilst the only accessible part, a narrow doorway was loop-holed, though this was concealed on the outside by a canvas screen, which gave an appearance of slightness to a very strong door.

“ There are means of defence here,” said Mr. Carteret ; “ but surely you have some amongst the crew on whom you can depend ? ”

“ But two, who, mulattos like myself, are bound to me by caste, which is just now a sacred tie, for each caste lives in continual apprehension of the other ; by former obligations too, and what’s more to the purpose, by their being wholly dependant upon me for their chance of being relieved from extreme distress. They have confidence

in me ; they fear me, and they know that, should they betray me, it would avail them nothing ; they would as surely be murdered as you and me. I can therefore depend upon them to the last extremity, and I place just as much confidence in them as may suit my own purpose for the moment, but no more. I am candid, you see.”

Carteret listened to this statement with intense anxiety, but not altogether without hope, for the speaker was evidently a shrewd, as well as a desperate man.

The Captain continued :

“ You must promise each of these mulattos a thousand dollars, should you be protected and saved by their exertions.”

“ Your reasons for trusting these men are quite satisfactory,” replied Carteret ; “ but are they firm and brave ? will they not fail us in extremity ? ”

“ If you knew their history, you would have no fears on that score,” and he smiled bitterly. “ Our crew,” he resumed, “ are a

set of the lowest and most ignorant wretches it was possible to find ; robbery and violence of every kind are familiar to them. They would as soon rob and murder me as any one else, but they are, and know themselves incapable of managing the vessel, and they cannot do without me. This constitutes my sole power over them ; but though often mutinous and threatening, they feel their helplessness, and generally return to obedience in a short time.”

“ ’Tis a slender tenure by which to hold rule over a band of ruffians ; but your confederates may, I think, be depended upon.”

Poor Carteret was like a traveller who, whilst crossing a mighty river covered with smooth and glossy ice, moving on steadily and full of confidence, when suddenly, with a bright blue sky overhead, he hears the voice of many thunders ; everything around him crashes ; the foaming flood is upon him, roaring on with all its long-restrained waves.

Amidst the wild chaotic scene, he gains a huge fragment of floating ice, and seated upon it, abandons himself to the violence of the current, thankful for having been saved from immediate destruction, and watching eagerly, is determined to avail himself of the slightest chance of safety : then bowing his subdued spirit, he places his hope in God, as he is whirled helplessly on.

“Fear not,” said the Captain. “Promise these two men the thousand dollars each—a sum beyond their wildest hopes—and having a cruel death on the one hand, with the prospect of such wealth on the other, they are yours, soul and body. My object was, in my desperation, to carry off some rich English family, with a view to a heavy ransom ; but I feel for you, and will save you or perish with you. No one on board but the mulattos has ever had access to this cabin, nor do the crew suspect its state of defence ; taken on board the evening we sailed, before the land-wind, and mostly

drunk, they were allured by promises of plunder, and having used them so far for my own purposes, I am quite prepared to shoot them, if necessary, to forward my farther views, for they have richly deserved it at my hands, the villains ! but I must go upon deck ; one of us three will always be with you ; when possible, two. You will of course arm yourself, and prepare for the worst. I run a tenfold risk by remaining on deck alone. There are refreshments in that locker."

Captain Lamerle, for so the little energetic mulatto styled himself, now went on deck, for he had, it seems, received by concerted knocking overhead, a hint that the crew were getting impatient because the boat had not returned. The third mulatto now entered. It was a great relief to Carteret, in his perilous position, to have a skilful and fearless ally like Lamerle upon deck, whose fate, as well as that of his two subordinates, was irrevocably bound up with that of him-

self and his family. He immediately addressed his companion, promised him the thousand dollars, and proceeded to arrange with him their defensive plans. They were soon joined by the man he had first seen in the cabin, who had made a preconcerted signal before the door had been opened to him, after which it was again carefully secured.

Carteret was not a little encouraged when he saw his sagacious supporters calmly and deliberately, as well as judiciously, preparing their very considerable means of defence, for a desperate resistance, and he began, for the first time, to feel some hope of safety. He removed his exhausted children close aft, to place them as far as possible beyond the danger of a chance shot from without ; then collecting sails, bedding, and everything applicable to the purpose, he formed with these materials a breastwork before them, which might, he hoped, resist a half-spent musket-ball.

All these operations had taken up much

time, and now there arose a considerable movement on deck, and overhead on the little poop: the crew were evidently astir, and daylight began to glimmer through a small, iron-grated skylight overhead, the only direct communication with light and air which this close, hot, detestable place could boast; but a larger or more convenient aperture would have been dangerous.

How unlike was all this to the balmy air which these unhappy prisoners had breathed; the glorious prospect they had gazed upon, from that broad verandah only the preceding evening; with what a relish would those parched and fevered lips have quaffed a draught of those fragrant, icy sherbets, which but yesterday had perpetually courted their acceptance. It was a sad change!

But suddenly noise and confusion upon deck announced that some new and important event must have occurred; something unwelcome too; high words arose, and the

voice of Lamerle was distinctly heard, but rather in a soothing, deprecating tone, than with commanding authority.

Carteret listened with breathless anxiety, but he could draw no positive information from the broken exclamations of the negroes ; for, though it was clear that they were of a threatening character, it did not appear that the prisoners in the cabin were in any way connected with them. He sometimes thought the tumult might have arisen from alarming objects which daylight had disclosed, and a faint hope of timely rescue arose. His wearied girls meanwhile slept, or seemed to sleep, and he beheld, with deep emotion, that their nurse, alarmed by this new movement, had, after having strengthened the bulwark which protected her charges, by adding to it everything which the most indefatigable search could discover, placed her own person as an inner rampart for their protection. This sight brought tears into the eyes of the brave father ; tears

which all the horrors of his situation had failed to elicit hitherto.

“They see the boat coming off,” said one of the mulattos; “but she is a long way astern, and they are venting their rage upon Lamerle for that.”

A more boisterous uproar now broke out, and Carteret could himself distinguish, amidst the clamour, that it must have reference to the presence of some strange vessel, which the more perfect daylight had revealed, and which, as it at once irritated and alarmed them, must be a cruizer. His hopes gained strength; for if they could but defend themselves for a short time from the violence of the ruffianly crew, they might yet be saved.

“There is aid at hand,” he said, addressing his mulatto companions, “and two thousand dollars each shall be yours, if we are saved.”

A gun was now heard astern, and although a long way off, it was a joyful sound to the

agitated father. He had not then deceived himself ; relief was really at hand ; but the gun was distant, and had not they too much reason to apprehend a sudden and overwhelming rush of brute force ?

The mulattos encouraged him to trust in their means of defence ; they knew, they said, how to avail themselves of those means to the utmost, and they knew also the enemy they would have to contend with ; adding that he might depend upon them ; indeed, they truly said, they *must* stand or fall with him now ; but they did not conceal their conviction that an attack would be made upon the cabin by the bloodthirsty negroes, maddened by despair at the approach of a cruizer ; for, as they never gave quarter, so they never expected it:—such was St. Domingo warfare !

Another shot, and another were heard, but Mr. Carteret could not resist the evidence of his ears, that each shot was more distant than its precursor, and the firing soon ceased

altogether ; what would he not have given to have had one minute's conversation with Lamerle, whose quick eye would have fully scanned the state of affairs ; but it was, beyond all things, necessary to avoid drawing the attention of the crew to the cabin and its occupants. The two mulattos had taken their post permanently, and with Carteret stood prepared for immediate action. The cabin-door, the only point of access, was shored up inside. Lamerle had taken his desperate stand on deck ; no communication could pass between them and him ; the schooner was sliding through the water ; no more guns were heard, and Carteret remained in a horrible state of suspense. He asked himself what could have become of the cruizer who had fired those guns which had so evidently been farther and farther off, till they had so mysteriously ceased ?

CHAPTER IV.

A STRANGE appearance the captured boat made when alongside the tender, which she almost equalled in length. She was a remarkably fine galley, rowing ten oars, and capable of carrying a large number of men. She was so lumbered with chests, and boxes, and ornamental furniture—much of it torn down rudely by unskilful hands from its appropriate place—all strangely mixed up with a grotesque variety of inferior plunder, hastily thrown into the midships in such disorder

that most of her oars would have been rendered useless, even in practised hands. The ignorant creatures who had charge of her were controlled by no authority, and in a boat so laden, could make little headway with her, which was the sole cause of her having been captured ; for, could she have rowed all her oars, she must have reached the schooner long before daylight could have betrayed her to the ‘ Pickle.’

“ It is clear,” said Ralph, looking into the boat, “ that these scoundrels have been plundering some unfortunate house of no mean grade. God grant they may not have murdered the inmates.”

The galley’s crew of eight men were taken on board and double-ironed. Arms and many things of great apparent value were found concealed upon them ; but there were also in the boat two ill-looking English negroes, who disclaimed all fellowship with the others, saying they had been brought off by force.

“ Here’s a box,” exclaimed Shuldham, “ addressed to Andrew Carteret, Esq., Mount Cenis; and, by George! a beautiful case, with Julia engraved upon it.”

These were most distressing discoveries; for Mr. Carteret, of Mount Cenis, was well known as a wealthy and hospitable planter, the beauty of whose daughters was the theme of universal admiration, though our two young officers, who had arrived in the West Indies but recently, had never seen them.

“ This looks,” said Ralph, “ dreadfully alarming, Shuldham; and that rascally schooner is stealing away from us, whilst we are becalmed, out of gun-shot, too. Clear the boat, and hang her close under the stern; I will see what information I can get from these two slaves, who, if as innocent as they pretend to be, can give us important intelligence. There’s a breeze coming—thank God for that.”

But in vain did Ralph question these men. After a slight attempt to plead ignorance,

they refused to answer questions: neither promises nor threats availed; they persisted in stubborn, dogged silence, and Ralph thought he discovered looks of intelligence passing between them and the prisoners: they were, therefore, seized and searched; arms were found concealed on their persons, and trinkets of some value.

“Lash the villains down to two ringbolts, out of sight of their confederates, for such they clearly are,” said Ralph to Shuldham, who came up to report the boat secured, and to give his commander an unfinished letter, found amongst the plunder. It was from Mr. Carteret to his wife, dated the preceding evening, and, after describing their journey and proceedings, concluded by regretting that she was not there to share with them the tranquil, uninterrupted enjoyment of their delicious retirement.

“This is quite conclusive,” said Ralph, mournfully. “It is terrible, Shuldham, but Mr. Carteret and his beautiful daughters have

either been murdered in their beds by these traitor negroes, or they are now prisoners on board that schooner. If so, we may save them yet: but she's a regular clipper, and has greatly increased her distance from us; but, thank heaven, we have caught the breeze at last, and I trust we shall overhaul her quickly. She is a colonial-built craft, and not coppered."

"Had we not better cast the galley adrift?" said Shuldham; "she must stop our way considerably."

"In some degree, she stops us," replied his more experienced friend; "and with a strong, steady breeze, I would do so; but in this light and variable weather, the possession of that galley is a most important advantage to us in all ways; for, if she had got back to her own vessel, they might have sent off their prisoners in her for St. Domingo, even by daylight, and before our faces, if becalmed somewhat nearer to the land, and, under any circumstances, by night, without our having

had any chance of rescuing them, even if we should see them do it ; for our little skiff would not only have been unable to contend with that galley, but could never have got near to her, for she would row three feet to our little boat's two. By keeping the galley, should we get becalmed, which is highly probable, we may board the schooner with the galley before night. Their chief hope of escaping from us will be in the dark, and most probably the chief danger of personal violence to the captives too."

"The breeze freshens," said Shuldham.

"It does, it does. Poor man, how dreadful is Mr. Carteret's situation, *if* still living ! But, alas ! Shuldham, how terrible that *if* sounds ! how little do we short-sighted creatures know even what to wish for ! Little did poor Carteret imagine, when he wrote this letter, to what a fate the accomplishment of his wishes would have doomed his wife, the mother of his children. But surely, Shuldham, that schooner is badly

steered : I have more than once thought so, but now I am sure of it."

Now fully aware that the Carterets must have been the victims of this traitorous plot, Rutherford once more sought to elicit some information from their slaves, but in vain. He threatened to hang them, or offered them a free pardon, as a reward for any useful information—for he was in a state of the most painful perplexity ; but they both maintained the same dogged silence.

Again it fell calm ; but this time the tender had retained a light breeze long after the schooner had lost it, and had closed up very considerably with her ; but the day was wearing away fast, and the St. Domingo shore was now in sight, high and bold ; and again a light air sprang up.

" Surely," observed Shuldham, " a shot would reach her now."

" It would ; but our unhappy friends would be as likely to suffer from a long shot as the villains who surround them : nor is that all ;

for these savages, should we provoke them whilst we are yet too far off to afford our friends efficient protection, might have recourse to sudden violence, if they should have hitherto refrained from it ; a proof of which I think I perceive, inasmuch as some one in authority on board the schooner seems to be secretly working with us, which forms an additional reason for keeping quiet till we can play a sure game. Should it fall quite calm, however, the galley shall be tried. This uncertainty, at the approach of night, would become intolerable ; yet I risk all, if I strike before I can make sure of my blow. I think they will hardly dare to outrage their prisoners, now when we are getting so near to them, provided too with such formidable means of attack as that galley gives us ; but I doubt whether this calm will last long enough for our purpose, and a fresh breeze, when we were in the boat, would put us in difficulty, and lose time."

He was right :—again a breeze sprang up.

“ She has more wind than we have,” observed Shulldham; “ but she does not go from us !”

“ True : I have observed it for some time. Her sails are imperfectly trimmed, and she is ill steered. Either they have taken fright, plundered the vessel, and have all got drunk—which God forbid, for our friends’ sakes—or the hope which I have more than once been tempted to indulge is well-founded, and Mr. Carteret must have found means to gain over a party who contrive to impede her way, and thus to favour our approach. I have observed much in the handling of that vessel, which I can account for on no other principle ; and yet I do not see how that could be possible. At any rate,” he resumed, “ I am almost certain Mr. Carteret is still living, for I feel him, as it were, acting in concert with us, or at least some one for him.”

Whilst matters had passed thus on board the tender, none of those on board the schooner were in a very enviable position.

The negro crew, much alarmed, were becoming more and more dissatisfied with Captain Lamerle, and would doubtless, with their united force, have attempted the lives of the three mulattos, which, if they succeeded, would necessarily have sealed the fate of the Carterets, but that they had an English vessel of war in close pursuit of them, which is always an object of great terror to the negroes, whilst they knew themselves to be incapable of sailing, or even of steering their vessel ; and this last was the fact upon which Lamerle rested all his audacity. It was natural also for the crew, however irritated, to consider that the mulattos would have as much to fear from being captured as they themselves would ; and that they must, therefore, be as anxious to escape as the crew. Still suspecting they knew not what, and excited to distrust and hatred by prejudice of caste, though not daring to deprive themselves of the present aid of the mulattos, they postponed the hour of vengeance till the schooner should

be out of danger, when it was resolved that they should murder the mulattos, and take possession of the vessel and the captives.

Meanwhile, poor Mr. Carteret, who had been exceedingly elated by the sound of the first gun, which he had justly concluded must have been fired by some small English cruizer, had been doomed, in his dark and dreary prison, without the possibility of communication with the deck, to hear the gun fired again and again, and always at increasing distances. This, although very distressing to him, was not altogether incomprehensible. The cruizer, he knew, might have been becalmed, and her ceasing to fire altogether, would be the natural consequence of increased distance. It will be recollected that these guns had been fired to bring-to the galley in a calm, whilst the schooner had been slipping away with a breeze ; but, as the wind became more fresh and steady, Carteret knew by experience that it would reach the cruizer also ; and upon this all his hopes rested.

But hour after hour had passed away ; no more guns were heard, nor any other indication of the presence of the cruiser. Occasional squabbles on deck broke the gloomy silence, but nothing could be inferred from them, nor in that gloomy dog-hole were there any possible means of ascertaining what might be going on above-board. Carteret's mulatto companions in the cabin could know no more than himself, but they gave him some confidence, by assuring him of their entire faith in the courage and sagacity of Lamerle, who understood his crew well. For the anxious father to be thus confined in darkness and in ignorance, whilst so much was going on, in the result of which he had so awful a stake, was dreadful, and it was not a little aggravated by the mysterious silence which prevailed around him ; for Julia and Laura, completely exhausted, slept, or seemed to sleep. All this was horribly tantalizing ; yet, as Lamerle did not venture to afford him the slightest hint from the deck, evidently lest he should draw

the attention of the crew upon the cabin, he was compelled to wait in an agony of suspense for some change, till at length, as he looked upon his poor helpless girls, he began to give way to despair; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth; he was bodily and mentally exhausted—he felt faint.

Lamerle would gladly have raised Mr. Carteret's spirits; but he knew the ferocious crew around him, and dared not risk a word that might rouse their fury. The crafty mulatto busied himself ostentatiously in steering, and quitted the helm from time to time, pretending to trim the sails more accurately with his own hand. It was the yawing occasioned by this manœuvre, and the mis-trimming of the sails, thus artfully accomplished, which had caught the quick eye of Rutherford, and had so puzzled him.

Lamerle had the courage to do all this, though closely watched by the jealous eyes of men already thirsting for his blood, and

only awaiting the slightest provocation to murder him ; but he had chosen them for their utter ignorance of sea matters, and he thus boldly retarded the progress of his craft considerably, though very cautiously, under the pretext of extreme anxiety to accelerate it. Had Mr. Carteret known that the tender had closed within half gun-shot of him, and that her fire had not been renewed, solely that he and his family should not suffer from it, or the crew be provoked by it to acts of violence, and moreover that she was still closing with them, from what hours of agony would it have saved him !

The breeze was again getting light, as Ralph intently watched the proceedings of the schooner.

“By Jove !” he exclaimed, “she is yawing still more, and her sails are not half trimmed. Can it be fright or stupidity, or is it not rather that the man sailing the vessel is in league with us ? Yet how can that be possible ?”

Again he watched her closely, then he resumed :

“ ’Tis nearly calm again. Get the galley ready—I’ll board her at once ; we are only half gun-shot off. I will not give them any more time for mischief, so fire a shot over her—well over her, Shuldham. Seeing us so near, and preparing to board with the galley, it will rather terrify than provoke them now ; and to hear the gun so near them, must carry comfort to the hearts of the poor captives ” — if not too late, he would have said, but the words died away upon his lips.

A shot was fired over the schooner, then a second. It was getting late, St. Domingo was at no great distance, and Ralph feared, above all, the chances of escape that the dark hour might afford. It was now quite calm, and the galley was nearly ready.

“ Shuldham,” he said, “ examine carefully the irons of the prisoners, and especially of those two traitor slaves. I leave you five men ;

you must not hesitate to shoot the first ruffian who may trouble you, or more of them, if necessary. Fire another shot, and into her rigging aloft this time. I would remind the villains that, as we are so very near to them, they will have quite enough to do to take care of themselves. Our poor friends will rejoice to hear our shot, followed by our cheers, for I am determined to believe that they are yet unharmed. And now shove off, lads, and remember to hit hard, for these scoundrels have wonderfully thick heads."

Three cheers were the reply of his brave fellows. The last shot rattled amongst the lofty spars of the schooner, as the galley rushed straight for her.

Carteret, in his dreary imprisonment, had somewhat rallied; he listened anxiously to sounds on deck, which of late had boded him no good. He was prepared to die at his post, and he felt confidence in his two supporters; but Lamerle, on deck alone,

amidst a host of suspicious and sanguinary wretches, seemed to be in extreme peril. Retreat to the cabin was no longer open to him ; the sole entrance had been strongly barricaded inside by his own orders. Lamerle placed his hopes wholly in his own craft and courage. The calm increased his danger, for his crew seldom thought beyond the present moment, and the mulatto's seamanship could not avail them in a calm. It became evident to those below that they were threatening Lamerle, and that his situation had become desperate.

Three successive shots were fired from a short distance ; the third crashed amongst the schooner's lofty spars ; this was immediately followed by three British cheers.

Carteret, whose despair had been but momentary, clasped his hands ; he was almost frantic with joy, but the struggle was yet to come.

Lamerle, as if resolved to make what atonement he could, exclaimed ostensibly to his crew :

“Their boat is coming to board! we are more than two to one! only defend yourselves as I will do, and we will beat them off, and be safe on shore in St. Domingo before sunrise to-morrow. Only beat them off this once! there’s a fine breeze coming, and close at hand too!”

Thus did this daring man strive to the last to mislead and betray his ruffian crew, now that they had done his work, by drawing their attention wholly to the defence of the vessel, which he well knew was hopeless, in order at once to put those in the cabin on their guard against a sudden rush, and encourage them to a resolute defence, by showing them how near at hand was efficient aid. Perhaps he had entertained some hope that, by promoting a momentary resistance to the boarders by his own crew, he might find an opportunity of passing over to the enemy—a thought congenial to such a man.

Gladly was the all-important intimation received by Carteret and his confederates;

the muzzles of their muskets were forthwith applied to the loopholes, which covered the only narrow approach to the cabin-door, which was itself strongly secured, and each man had a second musket by him in readiness. A moment of awful suspense followed ; there was a great movement on the poop ; a pistol-shot was heard, and a body fell heavily ; there was a rush ; a second shot was heard. The suspicion that they had been betrayed had maddened the crew ; Lamerle had made a desperate resistance ; there was a savage yell, a piercing shriek, and then a splash in the water. Lamerle had met his fate manfully, and even Carteret felt for him, notwithstanding all he had suffered.

Uproar and confusion prevailed on deck, and almost instantaneously a rush was made towards the cabin-door, with horrid cries, and ferocious threats ; the peril was imminent, and the poor terrified girls, who did not comprehend their father's means of

resistance, clung to each other in their helplessness. Julia was silent in her despair; her sister prayed audibly, whilst poor Jemima did all she could to comfort them, regardless of her own fate. The cheers of the advancing seamen were more distinctly heard; Carteret and his two mulattoes stood firm; the first touch of the cabin-door was the signal to fire; the canvas screen had been torn down by the assailants, who, crowding into a narrow passage, pressed madly forward, scarcely anticipating resistance. But at the very muzzles of the guns, a volley was poured into their naked breasts, piercing many of them through and through, and before the survivors could recover from their consternation, a second volley was fired upon them; but as they were no longer in a compact mass, it consisted this time of buck-shot and langridge, which told with dreadful effect.

Well did the mulattoes, now fighting for their lives, understand the murderous arts of

civil warfare, as it is always mercilessly carried out in such a state of society as that which then prevailed in St. Domingo, which was indeed the rule of the red flag in all its horrors. The shrieks and yells of the repulsed ruffians were appalling.

Meantime, the galley rapidly approached the schooner, opposed only by a straggling and ineffectual fire of musketry. Rutherford, as he drew nearer, became aware of the wild confusion upon her decks, from the irregular firing on board, mixed with cries and yells. What might be the fate of the captives amidst such a scene, if indeed they still survived, he hardly dared to think ; but he urged on his men at the oars. It was little they needed the spur in such a cause.

“Stretch out ! give way, my lads !” he said ; “precious lives may depend upon a single moment !”

An attempt was made to get hold of a body just thrown overboard from the

schooner, as the boat flew past it ; but there was only the half of a mangled corpse ; the water, for some distance around it, was deeply dyed with blood, a shark had cut it in two.

“ Good heaven ! ” said Ralph, shuddering, “ they must be murdering their prisoners ! we are too late to save them. Avenge them we may, but that is poor satisfaction.”

“ Sir,” said the bowman of the boat, “ this is the body of a man of colour.”

It was Lamerle.

Again there was hope. One minute more, and they would be alongside of the schooner, hand to hand with her detestable crew ; and it was high time, for a breeze had caught her sails, whilst the tender lay becalmed. Had the negro crew known how to take advantage of this, she might have once more gained a fair chance of escape ; but they were utterly incapable of trimming her sails to the breeze, and steering her steadily for the land, even if they had not been in that state of

confusion and disorganization, which now prevailed amongst them to such an extent, that the most pressing extremity of danger could not unite them, even for the defence of their lives.

Whilst the viler sort had been shedding their blood in a bootless attempt to force the cabin, and massacre those within it, the braver and better part—for even amongst the most depraved and brutal of human beings there are still shades and gradations of criminality—opposed the boarders with desperate energy. They fought not now for victory—no hope remained of that; they fought only to inflict as much injury as possible upon their victorious assailants; but the blind fury of a handful of half-armed desperadoes could not long resist or materially injure brave and disciplined seamen, led by Ralph Rutherford; and they were cut down without mercy.

The firing from the cabin had ceased as soon as the British boarders were heard upon

the deck; but Carteret and his mulattos stood upon their guard.

“ So help me Gor, Miss July, I hear dem sailor man board. We no fear now, darlings;” and the sagacious creature flung her arms around the terrified girls.

During the most trying moments, Jemima had been calm and self-possessed, wholly occupied with sheltering and protecting her trembling, sobbing charges from the chance of injury by a stray ball; but now that she felt they were safe, convulsive sobs, floods of tears, and an incomprehensible jargon of some rude African language, mixed with negro English, burst from her with irrepressible vehemence. Her feelings, so long pent up and denied utterance, overpowered her, and she appeared almost frantic.

A loud cheer from the decks—that sound so truly animating to British ears—removed all doubt of their safety. Carteret threw down his musket, and knelt to offer up his fervent, though confused thanksgivings to the God of Mercy !

Those only who have endured such exquisite misery as the sudden fall from something like the summit of earthly happiness to a situation of indescribable horrors, thus suddenly inflicted upon a fond parent, can judge of the state of Carteret's mind, when that cheer assured him of rescue and of safety. His girls, recalled to life, rose from their wretched lair, and clung to him with minds still vibrating between hope and fear. They were roused by a voice from the deck, calling upon Mr. Carteret, and beseeching him to say that he and his children were safe.

" Safe—all safe, God be praised !" replied Carteret, " and eager to welcome their gallant deliverers."

" You have nothing more to fear," resumed Ralph ; " a boat is ready to convey you to the Admiral's tender. The ' Pickle ' is a vessel not altogether unknown to you, I believe, Mr. Carteret. I have some indispensable duties to attend to here, after which I will consult you about our farther proceed-

ings. Form your own plans ; I am wholly at your service."

Meantime the 'Pickle,' having caught the breeze, had been brought up within hail. Shuldham had been painfully alive to the perils of the captives, and could no longer endure his apprehensions. He had been made acquainted, therefore, with the happy state of affairs, and directed to make every possible preparation for the reception of the Carterets. Most carefully, most gladly had he done this, and all was ready for them before they could reach the tender.

It was not easy, even for a firm and brave man like Andrew Carteret, worn out with mental sufferings and bodily fatigue, to collect his thoughts, and decide upon any plan. His poor girls had but one wish—which was, to get out of their horrid prison into the Admiral's tender. They had frequently made little excursions in her with their friend, the Admiral. Her cabins were familiar to them, and it seemed to their excited imagination

that their home had come to seek and to save them ; so delightful was the change, and so strange appeared the sudden removal from the den of horrors to a locality so agreeably familiar to them.

Julia had soon so far recovered the natural bias of her mind, that she had begun to figure to herself a hero of romance in the gallant leader of those who had so opportunely rescued her—the youthful owner of that rich voice, which had betrayed such deep feeling whilst asking assurances of their safety. The transition from this point to a recollection of her dishevelled appearance at so interesting, so important a moment, threw her into despair ; nor was there even a mirror before her by which she might have been enabled to arrange a hasty toilet.

Jemima, with true female address, saw all this, and exerted herself to arrange the deshabille of her darling to the greatest advantage ; no very difficult matter, when the object of her solicitude was a tall, graceful,

lovely creature, just merging into womanhood.

The hasty toilet of both was soon made, and the galley conveyed them and their father to the commodious and well-known cabins of the tender, where young Shuldham received them with the kindest attention.

Julia had pouted a little, when she found that her tall, handsome deliverer, as soon as he had offered his congratulations, in tones and terms which enchanted her, and had placed her carefully in the boat, returned gravely to his important duties with a stern and business-like countenance, as if he had looked upon her wholly unmoved; but when she had considered the matter, she resolved to revenge the insult offered to her charms, by making the next meeting decisive.

Little did poor Rutherford imagine this, whilst cursing his hard fate, and lamenting that he should be compelled to forego the smiles of that lovely girl, to drudge with disgust through an almost interminable series of

disagreeable duties, the proper performance of which required great consideration, and the utmost circumspection. Never before had Ralph found himself so averse to business, and so little did he suspect either the displeasure or the vengeful designs of the fair girl, whom he had so intensely admired, that he looked forward with great impatience to meeting her under circumstances more conducive to their mutual taste.

CHAPTER V.

THE kind-hearted Shuldham, who had that day suffered almost as much as the Carterets, during so many hours of painful uncertainty as to their fate, had prepared the small, but well-fitted cabins of the tender for the reception of his fair guests, with equal zeal and good taste; and as he was so recently from port, he was able to place a very fair display of refreshments in readiness for them.

Shuldham's reception of his guests was most cordial—well suited just then to the

feelings of all; and when he had conducted them to the cabins, the recollection of which was inextricably bound up in their youthful minds with scenes of festivity and enjoyment, the choice though simple repast, which had become important, and the unwearied attentions of their young host, formed such a contrast to the scene they had so recently quitted, that their minds were bewildered by the rapidity with which they had twice passed from one extreme to the other.

Mr. Carteret, more composed than his daughters, shook Shulldham heartily by the hand, and thanked him for the kind consideration with which he had prepared to receive his wearied children. Honest Jemima was more noisy in her expressions of satisfaction.

“Gorrum blessy, Massa!” she exclaimed. “Miss July, only tink, her see! Massa boxes, Missy’s everything. Musubo Jumbo heself do dis—neber see de like before.”

The astonishment of those whom the good old soul had thus addressed was fully equal to her own, though very differently expressed. Shuldham, in few words, explained the mystery, stating these things to have been taken from the galley ; and, leaving them to enjoy their new position undisturbed, pleaded duty, and returned to the deck.

The courtesy of the young officer had been much more favourably appreciated by the gentle, considerate Laura, than by her somewhat imperious sister, who, bent on conquest, had set her heart upon exacting implicit homage from his more stern and commanding friend, who was also taller and handsomer than Shuldham—he who, although really very far from having overlooked or undervalued the charms of the ambitious beauty, had yet deliberately returned to the execution of his important duties, as soon as he had consigned her, with the other members of her family, to the care of Shuldham ; a sort of indiscri-

minate attention, her share of which by no means satisfied Julia, who was by nature a monopolist.

Rutherford's immediate object was, of course, to restore Mr. Carteret to his home and his friends with the least possible delay ; but he had great difficulties to contend with, such indeed as might have perplexed a youth of a less decided and less energetic character ; for, with a crew of twenty men, two of whom were wounded, he had two vessels to manage, and between forty and fifty ferocious prisoners to guard, without the means of manacling half that number. This was a situation which would have given Rutherford little concern, but for the precious charge which had so strangely devolved upon him. As was his wont in great and unforeseen difficulties, he gave a few minutes to the consideration of the case in all its bearings, and then formed his resolution.

His plan now was to send away all the prisoners in the galley and the schooner's

boat, with provisions and water enough to enable them to reach the St. Domingo shore, which, with common diligence, they might do before sunrise next morning; then to scuttle and sink the schooner; and thus to keep his own little vessel clear, and his crew united, for the protection of his fair guests.

The advantages of this mode of proceeding were obvious and undeniable. It was solely a conviction that it was illegal, and might subject him to severe animadversion before a court-martial, or civil court, or an Admiralty court, the result of which might utterly destroy his prospects in life—which made him hesitate.

Many a gallant officer, ever ready to risk his life in action, has shrunk from an onus of this sort. It is a great though ever unappreciated peril to the sea-officer, who has everything to lose, nothing to gain on such occasions; and he must be strongly tempted to decline a heavy and ungrateful responsibility, suffer who may.

Night was fast approaching, not a moment was lost in placing the prisoners in the galley, with their water and provisions. The state of the wounded greatly distressed Rutherford, but he had no medical aid even for his own wounded men, nor could he procure it till he should arrive at Port Royal; and these men would be landed in St. Domingo amongst their friends long before he could reach that haven.

“ Besides,” said Ralph, arguing this question with himself; “ there would be no great mercy in curing these wretches first, and hanging them afterwards, which must be the case, if I should take them to Port Royal.”

He then called upon the mulattos to point out the two men amongst the crew who were the bravest, and the men most likely to maintain such a shadow of authority as would preserve them from absolute anarchy (which would inevitably consign them all to a horrible death), and control the distribution of

their provisions. These men he armed, and then having publicly conferred authority upon them, he explained to them all, by aid of the mulattos, that he had given to them the boon of life and liberty; that the coast of St. Domingo was before them; that they had ample means by which to reach it safely, if they would row steadily all night, but if they chose to quarrel and hinder each other, they would perish miserably, and the fault would be their own, not his; he charged them to obey the men he had placed over them and waved them off.

This generous treatment was as far beyond the expectations of these buccaneers, as it was beyond their merits; and reckless barbarians though they were, they did not depart without expressing rudely, but clearly, something like gratitude to, and admiration of the British chief, for in these wars they never gave or expected quarter.

Having seen them fairly off, Ralph hailed Shuldham, and directed him to put his eight

prisoners into the schooner's boat, fitted and supplied as the galley had been. He then sent the boat to the tender with the Mulattos, and all his other spare hands, keeping a few men to cut away the schooner's masts and skuttle her, no very difficult task in a vessel of such slight scantling ; but growing impatient, he soon after returned to his own vessel, and sent Shuldham to complete the destruction of the schooner, warning him to quit her in time to prevent danger to the boat when she should go down, as they had no other.

His first object was to get the schooner's boat away with the eight prisoners, for it was getting late, and he wished them, if possible, to keep sight of the galley.

Mr. Carteret hearing Ralph's well-remembered voice upon the tender's deck, came up to greet him ; but the first objects that met his sight were two of his own slaves strongly fettered. They held down their heads when they saw their injured master now once more

in power ; but he had recognised them as men of bad character ; though on his first coming on board the tender, he had in the agitation of his mind overlooked them.

Jemima alone had then recognized the delinquents, but she never interfered unless it was to gain indulgence or forgiveness for her fellow-slaves, for whom, through her young mistresses, she had often been a successful advocate.

Carteret started with amazement at the unexpected sight, for there had been, amidst the exciting events of the day which had followed each other so rapidly, no leisure for Ralph to think about these men, and Lamerle's hint had been forgotten ; their very existence had been totally lost sight of.

Carteret's exclamation of surprise brought Ralph to his side, and joyful was the meeting.

"The necessity for hastening the departure of this boat with the last of the robbers," he

said, "is urgent. I am most desirous to pay my respects to the ladies, and the instant this boat has been got rid of, I shall ask permission to do so."

"The girls will be delighted to see you," said the father, "and are aware of the important nature of the duties which have hitherto deprived them of that pleasure. But what do you intend to do with these scoundrels of mine? I know them well, and to find them here, clears up much in the history of our strange adventure of last night, which had hitherto puzzled and perplexed me."

"Hanging is too good for them," replied Ralph, "if my suspicions respecting them are well grounded. They must abide their trial, and are fit subjects for a severe example."

"If you knew all, Mr. Rutherford, you would entertain no doubt upon that point; but if you wish to confer a second indelible obligation upon me and my family, save us,

I beseech you, from the dire necessity of a public trial and execution. We are quiet people, and such a scene would be the death of some of us. Send them off, with their vile confederates, to St. Domingo. That polluted, blood-stained island is the natural home of such traitors."

"So it shall be then ; though I may chance to be called to account for it ; but we are often placed in positions where law and justice are at loggerheads. Common sense and good intentions form my court of appeal in all such cases, and when there is no room for doubt, I carry out their verdict, be it what it may."

"Send them away with the others, I beseech you, and leave us nothing to think of in this distressing matter," said Mr. Carteret, "but our gratitude under God to you and your brave companions."

"You have spoken just in time, my dear Sir, and I will do it," said Ralph ; then turning to a corporal of marines, he said :

“Release those men, and put them into the boat with the others. You must stand between me and old Father Law in this matter, Mr. Carteret. Mr. Shuldham will soon have completed his task ; he will then return on board, and we shall be ready to proceed, with this light breeze, but for what part of the Jamaica coast, I leave you to decide. We are wholly at your disposal.”

Carteret pressed Ralph’s hand warmly :

“My dear girls,” he said, “have sent good old Jemima to visit the two men who have been unfortunately wounded in saving us. Jemima is no unskilful leech, and I trust their hurts are not beyond her skill. We shall hope to see you very soon.”

Rutherford now hurried away to the boat with the remainder of the prisoners, and hailed the schooner, which was close to the tender.

“Shuldham,” he said, “hasten your operations ; every moment even of this light

breeze, is valuable to us. As soon as the water pours freely in, leave the schooner to her fate, for should she go down suddenly from under you, she might swamp your boat, and we have no other to pick you up. I shall run the 'Pickle' to a safe distance, and lay-to for you."

Having done this, Ralph at length felt himself free to turn his thoughts towards the bright vision which had flitted, for one short instant, before him.

But so important an event as the first deliberate meeting of Ralph and Julia, shall not be ignominiously tacked to the tail of a matter-of-fact chapter, inasmuch as, for good or evil, it must needs produce results of no small importance to our story.

CHAPTER VI.

RALPH RUTHERFORD had seen much, and endured much, for his age, and had more than once fancied himself in love; but the sensation with which he now approached the presence of that tall, slender, graceful girl, whose dangers had so deeply interested him, and whose sudden appearance amidst such harrowing scenes of bloodshed, had so powerfully impressed her bright image upon his excited imagination, was quite new to him. He had, by a great effort of resolution,

abandoned to others the delightful task of soothing and attending to the youthful beauty, steadily and sternly persevering in a troublesome and disagreeable duty, which he might so easily, though not with strict propriety, have transferred to another ; and he had not done this without indulging in some self-glorification.

He was now at length not only free to behold and to converse with that fair creature, but he knew that he was anxiously expected by her. The interview which his high sense of duty could with difficulty restrain him from seeking, when his important occupations had rendered it highly inexpedient for him to do so, could now be sought ; but what strangely inconsistent creatures are the wisest, and the firmest of us ! Here was the bold, the resolute Ralph Rutherford, nervously hesitating, instead of flying to the presence of the object of his most ardent admiration, who, like a warm-hearted, enthusiastic West Indian girl of seventeen had really imagined,

with respect to her expected visitor, all that a heroine of romance has been so often described in days of yore, as having conceived of Sir Gawen de Firebras, the Knight of the Silver Shield, when rescued, by his prowess in mortal combat, from some horrid ogre, fierce giant, or hoary magician. Was he not tall and handsome? was he not a warrior too? Had she not seen him, when the fight was over, calmly awarding life or death to her subdued oppressors? had not his countenance, stern in its manly beauty, softened, his eagle eye flashed with uncontrollable emotion, at her sudden appearance? was he not a lover after her own heart? and yet, (the imperious beauty sighed deeply, as she admitted the fact), and yet he had resigned her to another, to occupy himself elsewhere. And even now, when all was still, he came not, and the proud fair one pouted indignantly, but not unbecomingly, at the thought of such lack of *empressement*. She had availed herself of the armoury of

coquetry so strangely placed at her disposal, not rashly or injudiciously (for Julia possessed good taste) but slightly, and was now seated in a sort of Cleopatra attitude, which well became her, awaiting with a degree of fretful impatience, fast merging into ill-humour, the approach of her doomed victim.

'Tis strange, and has long been, with us, a powerful argument for the real existence of sylphs and gnomes, with all their puny toils and mischievous trickery—'tis passing strange, but it does perpetually happen, that elaborate efforts to improve personal appearance, do oftener mar than mend the matter ; nor does this apply exclusively to the gentler sex, for, to our shame be it said, that most ridiculous and contemptible caricature of manhood—the professed lady-killer—is perpetually the victim of his own over-strained adornments, or pretensions. For fair damsels to covet admiration, is natural, and to a considerable extent, commendable, when, as with our fascinating Julia at seventeen, it was open, artless, and innocent.

Ralph made his appearance at last, with a somewhat embarrassed manner, which perhaps did not reveal so much admiration as the wayward beauty had anticipated. Poor Julia ! the world was as yet to her one gay festival, and she the queen thereof ; the only disastrous event she had ever experienced had passed away like a summer storm, leaving the world around her more bright, more joyous than before. And Ralph did still behold in her all that was lovely and fascinating in woman ; but when they had first met on the rude and blood-stained deck, that sweet countenance still bearing the impress of terror, Julia's peculiar style of beauty had a piquancy which baffles description, investing that light and graceful form with a halo of poetry and romance which, surrounded by accessories of such deep contrast, had, for the moment, decked the fair girl with charms almost divine in the eyes of Ralph, so little accustomed to dwell on such objects, and had scattered his boasted philosophy to

the winds, although, by a great effort, he had in some degree saved appearances. But now the neat and orderly, though simple attire, those well-arranged ringlets, those sunny smiles, relieved from every trace of grief or terror, those brilliant eyes softened and radiant with joyous welcome; the very elements of ease and comfort which surrounded her, though perhaps they enhanced her loveliness, did yet help to dispel the illusion of her rapt lover, subduing his admiration to a more rational standard. Julia had become an object to be fondly loved, but no longer an idol to be adored. All this she read in his countenance; she saw that he loved her, but the imperious beauty recognised such calm and reasoning love, with feelings almost akin to disdain, and thus the meeting so fondly anticipated by both, did, to a certain extent, disappoint the one and the other.

All this is difficult to describe, and although it was intensely interesting to the chief actors

therein, passed wholly unobserved by Mr. Carteret, who was so much exhausted by the toils and perils of this late adventure, that he could scarcely exert himself sufficiently to decide upon his present plans, which required much consideration, and wholly occupied his mind. Laura had for a moment suspected she knew not what, but the duties of the tea-table which, as usual, had devolved upon her, and matters relating to herself especially, soon gave a different direction to her thoughts, and after the first flush of high-wrought feelings had in some degree subsided, Ralph's demeanour soon smoothed the ruffled vanity of the somewhat exacting Julia. A cheerful familiar conversation ensued, and Julia was restored to her usual good humour, for she was not of an age or temperament to brood over imaginary griefs, however prompt to take offence at any appearance of neglect.

“There is a light breeze,” said Shuldham, entering the cabin ; “the boat is hoisted up ;

the schooner has sunk somewhat suddenly, at last, head-foremost. What course will you steer ?”

Rutherford turned from the smiling Julia with such manifest reluctance, that the generous girl quite forgave his recent transgression. She begged Shuldham to be seated, and was once more all smiles.

“ Our proceedings, Mr. Carteret,” said Ralph, “ now depend wholly upon you. My sole object is to restore you and our fair friends here to your family, in any way you will suggest.”

“ I presume,” replied the somewhat perplexed father, “ that you could land us at the Retreat to-morrow, but I feel no wish to go there. My girls too, would, I am certain, rather avoid the sight of that place, once so dear to us, and a ride into the mountains would just now be fatiguing and disagreeable to us all, whilst to remain there would be impossible.”

Mr. Carteret hesitated as if he found it

difficult to devise a satisfactory mode of proceeding.

“Might I suggest,” said Ralph, “that which appears to me to be the best mode of procedure, though, as it would include your detention here for one, or perhaps two days, my judgment may be biassed by self-interest.”

“Pray say on,” said Julia, with a smile, her eyes brightening at Ralph’s tone and words. “We owe so much to your skill and gallantry, that I am sure papa will listen gladly to your suggestion.”

This was sweet music to Ralph, who proposed that they should stand in for the nearest part of the Jamaica coast, and send on shore messengers by a fishing-boat, for Mount Ceniz, and for Kingston, which would be the quickest mode of relieving their family from any suspense respecting them. He would send, he added, to the Admiral by the messenger, and the tender meanwhile would make the best of her way for Port Royal, from

whence the ladies might proceed by water, without fatigue, to Kingston, where the family would have arrived in time to welcome their return.

The two sisters highly approved of this project.

“Excellent, my young friend,” said Mr. Carteret ; “ your proposal, you see, quite charms my girls, at which you will scarcely wonder, when I tell you that Uncle Peter’s establishment at Kingston (you will have heard of Uncle Peter, for they continually speak of him) is as much their home as is Mount Cenis. One is, in fact, the town, the other the country residence of the family ; but Peter has many important advantages over me, exclusive of his affectionate disposition, and his imperturbable good humour ; first, because all the gaieties take place at Kingston, and secondly, because, I regret to say it, he spoils these children so woefully, that I am beaten out of the field. As they do not appear to be dismayed by the prospect

of a cruize in the 'Pickle,' we will adopt your plan. I shall prepare my despatches this evening, and we shall no doubt get hold of a fishing-boat returning to the shore early in the morning."

Ralph, though loath to go, felt that the ladies must require repose, and Mr. Carteret leisure to write his letters, and after a parting with Julia, which wore a much more promising aspect than their meeting that evening, Shuldham and he went upon deck, and having hauled their little vessel in for the land, took charge of her alternately during the night.

It is frequently said that, in affairs of the heart, opposite qualities prove most attractive. We think otherwise, and hold to the opinion that congenial spirits do most decidedly attract mutual regard; and Shuldham, a mild, reflective, amiable youth, though bold withal, did most certainly support our view of the subject; for, fully acknowledging the superior beauty of the all-surpassing Julia,

his heart did seriously incline to the gentle, retiring Laura. It may be argued that, under these circumstances, fall in love he must; and the brilliant Julia having been already seized upon by his impetuous friend Ralph, with whom he rarely ventured to compete, there was nothing left for it but to offer his homage to Laura.

There is, we are fain to confess, a provoking appearance of reason about this view of the case, and that it is which has induced us to state it ourselves, rather than leave it to be put forth as the sapient discovery of some deluded advocate of the attractive power of antagonistic characteristics and habits of mind, which we do hold to be utterly absurd; and we declare our honest conviction, that, had twenty counterparts of the lovely Julia been present, our friend Shuldham, even in the face of such an overwhelming battery of bright eyes and sunny smiles, would have followed the natural bias of his heart, by devoting himself to Laura.

Whether our fair sisters fell asleep early that night, may be doubted; the terrors and fatigues of the preceding day, however qualified since by some hours of rest, and peace, and safety, had fluttered them greatly—too much so perhaps for immediate repose. Even the genial excitement of the evening, and the prospect of restoration to those so dear to them at home, however soothing to the mind, were scarcely narcotics. Yet, after a time, with their spirits calmed and composed, they slept the sleep of youth and innocence.

The night wore away quietly, passing lightly over the heads of our friends. It was indeed a delicious night! just enough of wind to cool the sultry air, was wafting our little bark gently, yet swiftly over the scarcely rippled surface of those placid waters, without impressing any rude motion on the light and buoyant craft; no sound was heard save that soft murmur, more musical and more composing than the prattle of the mountain

brook ; for it whispered to them of progress made, whilst they still enjoyed the luxury of soft repose, half conscious, yet undisturbed.

Morning came ; the coast of Jamaica was plainly in sight, and the white sails of fishing-boats hastening thither with the produce of their night's labour, dotted the surrounding sea. A simple wheft, hoisted at the peak, soon brought one of the nearest boats to the tender, for they knew her well. The despatches were ready, but who was to take them ?

“ You tell me, Mr. Carteret,” said Ralph, “ that you wish these two mulattoes to be landed unquestioned, as men who defended you at the peril of their lives, and did you most important service at your greatest need. Your surest way to avoid all inquiry into their previous conduct, will be to give your despatches to them ; I will intrust my report to the one who goes direct to Kingston.”

“I quite concur in your views,” replied Carteret; “I will give them money for their expenses, and each of them shall have an order upon my brother for five hundred dollars, in part payment of my agreement. Thus we shall be sure of their prompt execution of our orders, and secure for them a gracious reception.”

The mulattoes, who had felt some misgivings as to their position, now that Lamerle was gone, and they were left wholly at the mercy of the man they had so cruelly injured, although they had ultimately, for hire, and to save their own lives, defended him, were delighted with their mission, and the immediate payment of five hundred dollars each, for they were not people to put much faith in any man’s promises, and would probably have hanged their own fathers to evade the payment of half the sum which Mr. Carteret had thus given to them.

Their despatch-boat gone, our friends sat down to breakfast in high good humour.

Their progress towards Port Royal was satisfactory, and they were now well assured that a few hours would suffice to relieve their friends from all anxiety for their safety, and that the morrow would unite the whole family once more, under the hospitable roof of Uncle Peter, that superb specimen of an old bachelor.

Fresh flying fish, procured from the boat, were a delicate and welcome addition to the breakfast-table. Mr. Carteret, refreshed and at ease, was in excellent spirits ; Ralph was in ecstasies ; the cool morning air, and the simple morning attire of Julia, whose countenance was radiant with youth, health, and intellect, enchanted him ; nor were his attentions lavished upon an ingrate.

Shuldham said little, and Laura almost nothing, but they ate less breakfast than their more enthusiastic companions, for your very energetic people do retain their appetites wonderfully, even when in love.

CHAPTER VII.

BUT whilst the time was passing thus pleasantly with our little party on board the 'Pickle'—for their minds were comparatively easy about their friends at home, now that they had dispatched tidings of their safety by swift messengers, all Jamaica, they knew, would soon be in a state of alarm and indignation at the perpetration of so daring an outrage upon one of the first families in the island, accounts of which would forthwith be trumpeted

throughout the island, bearing, comet-like, in their train, fearful rumours, shadowy indeed, and insubstantial, but fraught with terror to the ignorant and credulous, no small portion of society, asserting positively that every horror which the most fertile imagination could conceive had befallen the Carterets. Many, who possessed far less of prudence or sagacity than the Lord of Mount Cenis, would express their wonder that he should so inconsiderately have exposed his family, without protection, in so defenceless a place as the Retreat; these were of the numerous class who, always judging by results, strive to create for themselves a sort of royal road to the credit of superior intelligence and sagacity highly satisfactory to themselves, a road much travelled by ignorance and folly.

Fortunately, such confusion and dismay had prevailed at the Retreat, that it was late in the day before a messenger had been dispatched to Mount Cenis; no one liked

either to carry or to announce by letter so strange and fearful a tale.

Mrs. Carteret was a *soi-disant* invalid. She had fortunately retired to rest before the arrival of the intelligence, the bearer of which had probably loitered on the road; for, as there had evidently been domestic treachery in the case, all the slaves at the Retreat were in a terrible fright, feeling that every one of them must be liable to suspicion, and that in so atrocious a transaction, they would most probably be severely dealt with, upon slight evidence. Some of them indeed had ample cause for alarm; for, although those who had fled with the robbers were possibly the only two who had taken an active part in the abduction of the family, and the plunder of the house, the two delinquents had near connections, and known friends on the estate, some of whom must have been, to a certain extent, cognizant of the plot, or at any rate, must have known that the deserters had been in communication with strangers from

St. Domingo, which was in itself a crime of a very serious stamp.

The unwilling bearer of the report from the Retreat, by great good fortune fell into the hands of Uncle Peter himself. He was immediately placed in confinement, and as soon as he had been strictly examined, Peter Carteret sent off his confidential servant Mark, with a report to the Governor and the Admiral, and forthwith commenced preparations for starting at an early hour next morning for Kingston, well knowing that before daylight some exaggerated rumours of this terrible calamity must reach the household of Mount Cenis, and consequently Mrs. Carteret, in despite of all possible precautions. Poor Uncle Peter, almost broken-hearted at such accumulated horrors, aroused himself to ward off, as long as possible, the direful news from his sister-in-law; he controlled his own grief to spare the sudden shock to the feeble woman under his charge, and resolved to remove her at once

to Kingston, where at least she would have medical attendance, and that too before the fatal event should become the sole subject of speech and thought to all around her; for well did Uncle Peter know that it would be more easy to stay the rising flood when impelled by furious gales, than to check the progress of exaggerated rumours.

He pleaded to Mrs. Carteret an unexpected summons to Kingston, adding (most truly) that he could not think of leaving her alone at Mount Cenis, and that as she was far from being in a satisfactory state of health, he was desirous that she should be near Doctor Seacomb, for he felt that immediate medical advice might be necessary when the unhappy news should reach her.

“As I must go at once, Margaret,” he said, “you had better avail yourself of my escort.”

This proved, as he knew it would do, a most effective argument; the lady was accustomed to hear their movements sug-

gested by Uncle Peter, who, though he knew it not, and assuredly intended it not, did yet effectually rule all the family migrations, for the girls were sure to adopt all his views, which, to say the truth, were invariably dictated by a wish to promote their happiness, or to procure for them their favourite amusements, whilst their father, who was strongly attached to his brother, and much alarmed at the increasingly precarious state of his health, always complied with his wishes in such matters.

Having gained Mrs. Carteret's assent, it followed, as a matter of course, that they should set out on their journey at a very early hour in the morning, it being the established practice to do so in all hot countries, and fortunate it was that, being already very late, the preparations for so sudden a removal furnished Peter Carteret with indispensable occupation till the hour of departure arrived, for he had conceived a nervous apprehension about Mrs. Carteret's

feelings which forbad him to give way to his own, and just then reflection would have maddened him ; repose was impossible. The unceasing precautions he took during this melancholy journey, lest any information should reach his unconscious charge, were at least highly beneficial to himself ; nothing else could have prevented him from abandoning himself wholly to the grief that was gnawing at his heart ; but all his precautions could only defer the evil, for on their arrival at Kingston, the frantic disorder of that household, usually so quiet and composed, proclaimed but too loudly that the fatal news had reached them.

The domestic slaves so devotedly attached to the family, and especially to their young mistresses, flocked around the new-comers with clamorous importunities : did they bring news of Mr. Carteret, and of his daughters ? Should they ever see them again ? &c.

Such were the first sounds that met the ear of the wife and mother as she en-

tered that mansion, from which grief and terror had so long been excluded.

Poor Uncle Peter flew to her assistance. The astounded woman fixed a glassy unmeaning stare upon him. She had not clearly comprehended the extent of the misfortune, so suddenly announced in wild confused outcries ; but she was conscious that some dreadful accident had happened to Mr. Carteret, or to one of her daughters. Fatigued, bewildered, and frightened, she fainted, and Peter, having committed her to the care of her physician and her women, was at length left to feel the full weight of his wretchedness.

No words can convey an adequate idea of the state of Peter Carteret's mind, when, alone in his own apartment, he had leisure to consider, in all its bearings, the cruel event which had at one fell swoop crushed him, with all those who were dearest to him ; he almost hoped that it was but a fearful dream. Suddenly a note from the Admiral informed him that a fast-sailing vessel

had been detached in pursuit of the marauder.

“Alas!” said the unhappy man, after a moment’s reflection, “there’s no comfort in that ; our poor children will have been murdered, or dragged to that horrid St. Domingo, long before a vessel from Port Royal can reach them. My poor brother too ! but his fate is comparatively happy ; he will have died in the defence of his girls. Would that I had been with him to share his fate !”

Uncle Peter walked slowly up and down the spacious room, revolving in his mind all the horrid circumstances which had been reported to him. He was not a man to find solace in tears and lamentation. He sought anxiously, but vainly for some rational ground of hope ; but the Retreat was not upon that part of the coast to which rumour had lately attributed danger, and towards which he knew the Admiral had directed the particular attention of his cruisers. In vain he tortured

himself, no ray of hope was elicited. The painful efforts by which he had hitherto suppressed all outward expression of his mental sufferings, to ward off from the wife and mother, as long as possible, the cruel blow which he thought her so ill-calculated to support, had greatly aggravated his own sufferings, and the melancholy failure of all his strenuous efforts to find some ground for hope chilled him to the heart.

Doctor Seacombe had entered the room unheeded, though he had purposely opened and shut the door with unnecessary violence, hoping to attract the attention of his unhappy friend ; but Peter Carteret had neither eyes nor ears ; one dreadful subject had absorbed his whole mind. The physician was alarmed at the cold, stony look of his amiable, warm-hearted friend, the natural expression of whose countenance teemed with kindness and benevolence ; but at the moment in which the unhappy man had fancied that his heart's blood was chilled, it had not been altogether

an imaginary chill. He shivered from head to foot, and would have fallen, but that the friendly physician caught him in his arms. The over-burthened spirit had given way, and Peter Carteret's life hung by a thread. Nothing but the presence of a skilful physician could have saved him; and even now, though relieved by having been bled, from the immediate effect of this terrible shock, Peter Carteret was still in a state of extreme danger. Doctor Seacombe, though sent for elsewhere, resolved to remain with him, and fortunate it was that he did so. Mrs. Carteret, labouring under a confused notion that something had happened, was far from imagining the sad reality; she had shrunk from particulars, or rather perhaps, thus surprised, was really incapable of comprehending them, and she was soon, by the Doctor's judicious care, sleeping soundly under the influence of medicine, in a happy state of unconsciousness. It was for Uncle Peter he chiefly feared. Strong affections and great

depth of feeling, had produced a degree of agitation which his feeble frame could scarcely support. Opiates would have been more likely to increase than to allay his nervous excitement; to watch over and to soothe his feelings, if possible, was all the Doctor dared to attempt; but he gave orders that his patients should on no account be disturbed. Should news of any sort arrive, or letters, he would himself do what might be necessary.

He had been sitting about two hours by his unhappy friend's couch, not a word had been spoken; sometimes a gentle, half-suppressed moan was heard from the sufferer; sometimes his lips moved as if in prayer, but he had taken no notice of the Doctor. His eyes were closed, yet he certainly did not sleep. It was evident to his sagacious friend, that Peter Carteret's senses and feelings were more than usually acute, but concentrated upon one idea.

Just as it was getting dark, and the

Doctor was debating within himself the best and safest mode of creating a diversion in the thoughts of Peter Carteret, which he judged had now become indispensable to attempt by some means, the door was gently opened, and Mark, the faithful personal attendant of the master of the house, entered with noiseless step, and, in a low voice almost choked by the effort he made to suppress his sobs, whilst the tears ran down his dark and furrowed cheeks, said :

“Stranger want to see master, he hab letters—no will give dem—*must* see master, he say.”

“Stay here till I return, Mark ; I will see this stranger.”

It was the mulatto ! Imagine the Doctor’s delight when he had heard the mulatto’s tale, and held in his hand the letter of Mr. Carteret, which vouched for its truth. This was indeed unhopèd-for happiness ; but how should he communicate, with safety, such a joyful change to the feeble and excitable Peter ?

“It was fortunate that I saw occasion to remain here !” exclaimed the Doctor. “The abrupt announcement of this intelligence would perhaps have been fatal to my poor dear friend.”

He returned forthwith to his patient, telling Mark to go, and to take the stranger to his own room, not allowing him to converse with any one.

“You may believe, Mark,” he added, “all that the mulatto will tell you ; but speak not of it without my permission. I must have no noise or disturbance in the house.”

The worthy Doctor was so astonished and delighted at what he had heard from Mr. Carteret’s messenger, that it required time to sober down his own feelings, so far as to enable him to arrange his plan for communicating the happy news to his patient.

“My dear Mr. Peter,” he began, at length taking his friend’s hand—but poor Peter shook his head mournfully, and somewhat impatiently ; raised his woe-subdued countenance for one instant, as if imploring

the Doctor not to importune a hopeless sufferer. Seacombe pressed his hand affectionately, and speaking with a calm and firm, though a subdued voice: "My friend," he said, "there is hope!"

The man who was lying on his couch the image of heart-broken helplessness, too feeble to raise an arm, sprang at once upon his feet, before Seacombe could prevent it, and fixing a keen glance of inquiry on the Doctor's face, as if he doubted the evidence of his own senses.

"How?—when?—where?—what do I hear?—speak—speak!"

"There is hope, strong hope; the Admiral has received intelligence. Their rescue is more than probable."

"Mark!" exclaimed the excited invalid; "my horse! I must see the Admiral directly!"

"Be calm, be composed, my dear friend, and I will tell you all the Admiral could tell you—perhaps more."

Peter Carteret, exhausted by his effort,

sank once more upon the couch. He could not speak, but the mute entreaty of that expressive countenance was most eloquent. By slow degrees, and with judicious pauses, he learnt the whole truth ; and, thus communicated, it produced no ill consequences. He covered his face with his hands, and shortly afterwards looking up at his friend :

“Let us pray,” he murmured ; and his thoughts having happily taken this turn, Doctor Seacombe felt that he was safe, and no longer entertained any serious apprehension of immediate danger.

Peter having thus given vent to his feelings in fervent thanksgiving, consented to take a restorative prescribed by his friend. But when he actually beheld the handwriting of his brother, that dear familiar character which he had felt assured he should never see again, the paper dropped from his trembling hand, and he wept like a child. These were the first tears he had shed, and gladly did

his kind and skilful friend hail the sure prelude of calmness and composure, for such generally are the tears shed by men, and Uncle Peter, with all his amiable weaknesses, was, in severe trials, a man of strong mind.

He was soon able to read the note, and enthusiastically did he press to his lips a joint postscript signed "Julia and Laura to Uncle Peter."

For a short time Peter Carteret was perfectly satisfied: then starting up, in a tone of self-reproach, he said:

"But, Doctor, I am forgetting poor Margaret."

"Do not alarm yourself about Mrs. Carteret. Your considerate kindness kept her long in a happy state of ignorance, and when at last the rumours reached her, the clamorous grief of the household gave her only a very indistinct idea that some sad misfortune had occurred. Terror had made her as docile as a child. She submitted without hesitation to my advice, is still sleeping, and now,

thank God, will only wake to learn that all is well. By your care and caution the good lady has been spared a trial which she was so ill-calculated to encounter. Compose yourself, my dear Sir, and let not the pleasure of the return of our dear friends be marred by finding you ill. I shall now leave you to repose. Think only of those we may hope to see to-morrow."

The Doctor had heard a noise and general movement in the house, and his thorough knowledge of negro character, enabled him at once to divine the cause. No sooner had the mulatto told honest Mark that Mr. Carteret and his young mistresses were safe on board the Admiral's tender, and on their way to Port Royal, than the faithful affectionate old man leaped and danced for joy, forgot all the Doctor's orders, and calling the head servants about him to hear the news, such chattering and capering had ensued, as had led Seacombe to apprehend that Mrs Carteret's slumbers would be interrupted. He therefore

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hastened to her apartment to prevent any sudden disclosures, but he was too late, for he found her listening in bewildered amazement to a most incomprehensible tale of horrors, mixed up with screams of delight, in negro English, for three of her damsels were each rehearsing her own particular version of all that had occurred, and a great deal more. The arrival of the Doctor, which at once silenced the loquacious trio, was a great relief to the terrified and astonished Mrs. Carteret, for he simply told her that her husband and children were well, and would probably arrive on the morrow.

Peace, if not composure, was thus happily restored to the family; but Mark and the other heads of departments were still collected round the mulatto, cramming him with delicacies, and cross-questioning him in a most illogical style. The faithful creatures saw in the stranger only one of the rescuers of the family, and lavished upon him all the attentions they could devise. Had they

known the whole story, their courtesy would have been more scant.

But the wily rascal kept his own counsel, availing himself freely of the favourable opinion which his good news had created in the minds of the public, and, like many greater men, laughed in his sleeve, whilst he devoured the loaves and fishes so profusely lavished upon him, and so little deserved.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE frantic joy of Uncle Peter's household, when the news of the safety and immediate return of Mr. Carteret and his daughters first reached them, was expressed with even more of clamour than their grief had brought forth ; for joy is more congenial to the negro constitution, whilst grimace and caperings give more spirit to the exhibition of it. These unsophisticated beings rush at a bound from the extreme of sorrow to the wild, uncontrollable expression of delight. No

nervous shock accompanies the transition, however abrupt; for to suffer in such cases is one of the very questionable advantages of refinement, exercising its mysterious and dangerous influence chiefly on superior minds, enervated by indulgence, and the disposition to it is certainly fostered by idleness and want of occupation. It had nearly cost Uncle Peter his life. Mrs. Carteret, of a less affectionate disposition and less imaginative, had suffered comparatively little: she was no more in danger of suffering from such a cause than the rudest slave on the estate; and if her husband and his children had really perished, she (to use a much-abused phrase) would have been *wonderfully supported*. Uncle Peter never could comprehend this. He was too apt to take people, and especially ladies, at their own valuation; he had in his intercourse with the world bought some experience, but it had produced little effect, unless in deterring him from marriage. His principle was to

think every man honest till he found him otherwise—a very agreeable principle too, but by no means profitable.

Peter Carteret, however liberal in estimating other people, was himself morbidly conscientious; and thus he took himself to task upon the present occasion:

“Have I not long seen that Andrew was desirous to return to England for the sake of his dear girls? and have I not suspected, though he never even hinted it, that my foolish fears of an English winter have kept him here that he might not deprive me of all that makes life valuable by leaving me here alone? Yes! I have been the main cause of his running into this danger by detaining him here. I have seen all this, and have clung tenaciously to my own selfish views; but it shall be so no longer. I will urge our return to England.”

This soliloquy was here interrupted by the entrance of Doctor Seacombe.

“Should I not, my dear friend,” he said, “send a messenger down to Port Royal with letters for your brother? He and your nieces must be anxious to hear of you, for they well know that fearful reports must have reached you, long before their messenger could have brought you tidings of their safety.”

This was approved; and Uncle Peter’s faithful Mark was sent with the letters, as Mr. Carteret and his daughters might find some satisfaction in questioning the old man.

Meantime all went well on board the ‘Pickle,’ though there had been considerable uneasiness about the sufferings of their friends during the interval which must have elapsed between the first report of their disaster sent from the Retreat, and the arrival of the mulattos; but as the evening drew on, they flattered themselves that their friends’ fears would have been set at rest; and having arrived at this satisfactory conclusion, Mr. Carteret went on deck to enjoy his cigar,

leaving the young people in cheerful conversation in the cabin.

“Before this time to-morrow,” said Ralph, despondingly, “you will be with your friends at Kingston, and we shall feel ourselves deserted and desolate.”

Julia rallied him on his dejection, but gradually appeared to participate it.

“Shuldham,” said Ralph, impatient of his own gloomy thoughts, “give the ladies a tune on your flute—something that will not jar with our present thoughts.”

His young comrade obeyed; and sharing Ralph’s sentiments, played with exquisite feeling some soft and soothing melodies, which being in full harmony with the minds of his auditors, as well as with his own, were listened to with great interest. As the musician ceased, Mr. Carteret entered the cabin.

“My hand was on the door,” he said, “when you commenced that last sweet air. Had it continued an hour, I could not have moved—I was enchanted.”

Julia expressed her gratification ; and Laura blushed as if she had received these acknowledgments herself ; and Shuldham saw it and rejoiced. The gentlemen now rose to depart.

“ The weather is beautiful ! ” observed Ralph, in taking leave ; “ and if this wind continues much longer, the sea-breeze to-morrow will take us into Port Royal harbour, and we shall lose you.”

Mr. Carteret, on deck with the young men, told them how delighted he and his family should be to see them at Mount Cenis or at Kingston, and hoped they would spend as much of their time as possible with him.

“ Uncle Peter,” he continued, “ is a second self. He will be unreasonable enough to wish to have you always with him,” he added, laughing ; “ but Peter is thoroughly to be known in five minutes, and to know him is to love him.”

Time flew swiftly on board the tender, and Ralph was somewhat out of humour at finding the wind so favourable, for the

alternate land and sea-breeze, interrupted only by a short interval of calm, wafted them rapidly on their way. Julia saw her lover's scarcely suppressed discontent, and enjoyed it as a fresh homage to her attractions. About three o'clock on the second afternoon of their stay on board, they ran up the narrow entrance to Port Royal harbour, before the fresh sea-breeze, passed close to the fort, and as they shot into the fine and spacious anchorage, gradually opened a view of the flag-ship, and other men-of-war lying there.

As soon as the anchor was gone, Mark was on board; the old man wept for joy at beholding the objects of his fervent attachment once more safe and well, after all their perils, which, great as they really had been, were wonderfully magnified by wild rumours. For some time it was impossible to extract anything from this confidential messenger but unintelligible exclamations of joy and delight; but luckily Doctor Sea-

combe's letter told them all that was really important. In a very short time Mr. Carteret and his daughters were carefully placed in the boat, and in an instant they were flying rapidly up towards Kingston, in a fast-sailing vessel, before a strong breeze. Julia and Laura were silent, each occupied with reflections arising from the strange events of the last few days, a short period indeed, but crowded with more important and more memorable events than all the preceding years of their young lives, which, mingling with thoughts of those dear ones they were hastening to meet, and with recollections of those from whom they had just parted, almost bewildered the young and inexperienced girls. Mr. Carteret also was wrapped in thought; he had his cares and his fears; but anxiety about his brother far outweighed all other considerations. He knew what Uncle Peter must have endured during so many hours of hopeless grief for their supposed fate, and how unequal his

delicate frame and sensitive mind must have been to the workings of his strong feelings. The suddenness too of his relief from such mental torture, modified, as he knew it had so happily been, by the care of the friendly physician, could not have been wholly free from danger. He longed, yet feared, to see his brother, justly apprehending that the emotion unavoidable when the warm-hearted invalid should behold him, might prove injurious. He was uneasy too about Mrs. Carteret, though not alarmed, for he well knew that, under any calamity, however severe, if it touched not her own person, the good lady would display a high degree of fortitude and resignation.

Ralph and his friend stood looking after the boat which had robbed them of such treasures, as she sped rapidly forward, under her white and swelling canvas; but their reverie was soon broken.

“’Pon my life, Rutherford, you are a lucky fellow!” exclaimed Lord George, as

he stepped from his boat on board the tender. "So you have rescued that lovely Julia Carteret, the most beautiful creature in the island, as you have discovered, I perceive to your cost, if I may judge from the fixed gaze with which you were watching the boat that has borne her away."

"They are certainly sweet girls, Carleton, and we have been fortunate in rendering them a service," replied Ralph, with all the composure he could assume; "and don't you think our occupation has been somewhat more interesting than Port Royal dinners and dignity-balls?"

"If you had danced with your goddess as often as I have, you would be as sensible of the difference as I am. The fair Julia is by far the best dancer it was ever my happy lot to waltz with."

There was something in the idea of his beautiful Julia waltzing with the handsome, titled youth before him which grated painfully upon the feelings of Ralph. He became all

at once grave and reserved, making his lively friend smile at the change.

“By the bye,” he said, “the thought of that girl always distracts me; she waltzes like a sylph. But I am desirous to tell you that the Admiral wishes to see you at the Pen, so you had better prepare yourself for the visit at once, and then wait upon the Captain. You will be expected to sleep at the Pen, and in half an hour the Captain, who is now at the dockyard, will be waiting for you. I am going back to him.”

There was no time to be lost. Ralph had his report to finish, and as he drew it up, was a little distracted with visions of Julia waltzing with that gay youth, with those large and lustrous dark eyes flashing upon her delighted partner, and her fair cheek flushed with exercise and conscious victory; but he would not pursue the subject; he tried to cast it from him by a strong effort, and continued his task. Still it would intrude itself upon him; fortunately his

time was limited, and he had much to do ; and in despite of the unpleasing subject which so pertinaciously forced itself upon him, Ralph was at his post at the time appointed, where he met the Captain, and they were soon on their way to the Pen.

The Captain, as they sailed rapidly on, occupied himself with inspecting some reports he had prepared, and Ralph was left for a considerable time to his own reflections, which were more occupied with waltzing than they had ever been before ; he had always disapproved of it, but now he detested it.

On their landing, a kiterine soon took him to the Pen. It was nearly dinner-time when they arrived : he had a few minutes' audience of the Admiral, at which he was well received, and was told that farther discussion of the subject of his report would be deferred till the morning.

The dinner passed off agreeably enough. The Admiral pleaded business, and retired early. On Ralph's right hand sat Captain

Dawson, a short, quaint, good-humoured old bachelor who had lately arrived in the 'Bourdelaïse' from England. He had never been in Jamaica before, but had evidently heard a favourable account of Rutherford, for he questioned him much about his late cruise, and, though evidently a formalist, treated him with great cordiality.

"I hope you will like the station, Sir," said Ralph.

"I do like all that I have yet seen of it, which, however, is not much," replied the Captain; "but I have had my adventure too, and hope to learn wisdom by it."

This was spoken in a tone evidently meant to provoke inquiry; there was a twinkle of the eye not to be misunderstood.

"May I ask, Sir," said Ralph, "what adventure you can have encountered, not having as yet quitted Port Royal harbour?"

"Why, Mr. Rutherford, it was a trifle, but might have proved serious. It was

simply this: on my first coming up to the Pen, I was driven up, with much courtesy, by our friend the flag-lieutenant there, and a very agreeable young fellow he is; but as he was to remain here, he introduced me to his friend Captain Lutkins, of the 'Shark,' who volunteered to drive me down to the boat in the evening. I sat by Captain Lutkins at dinner, and have seldom met a more polite or attentive gentleman, full of anecdote too. I passed a delightful evening, and entered Captain Lutkins's kiterine in excellent good humour, rather fancying a drive by starlight with so agreeable a companion. We had gone some distance, with great success, when my companion asked me to take the reins for one moment, whilst he lighted his cigar. I assured him that I never ventured to drive, horses being altogether out of my line, and moreover, being very short-sighted, I could not see my way; but he begged so hard, that I at last took the reins. He was a long time in getting a light. All at once

he called out to me, in a tone of alarm, to pull the horse sharp to the left. I did so, and over we went, down a deep gravel-pit. The horse was killed, and the old kiterine was knocked to pieces. The Captain had jumped out just in time. How I escaped I can't tell you; it was wonderful; but I did get off with a few bruises. Lutkins came down in all haste to see how matters stood with me, and was surprised—I hope agreeably so—to find that I had got off so well.

“ ‘My dear Sir,’ he said, ‘how could you pull the horse to the left, when I said to the right? however,’ he added, ‘as you are not hurt, I don’t care for the horse, and the old rattletrap.’ Now, Sir, I felt quite certain that he had told me to pull to the left, but I thought he had made the mistake in the hurry of the moment, and it was not worth while to dispute the point; but next day, upon talking over the accident with my old friend Captain Screwton, at Port Royal,

he asked me how I could be so green as to allow Captain Lutkins to drive me down on a dark night? ‘Why,’ said I, innocently, ‘is Captain Lutkins a notoriously bad whip? The flag-lieutenant suggested the arrangement: he ought to have known that.’ ‘Yes,’ replied my friend, ‘he did know that Lutkins is a first-rate whip; but he knew also that Lutkins was first on promotion, and that if Lutkins should take it into his head to make a vacancy, which was quite possible, he knew that he, the said flag-lieutenant, would forthwith step into the command of Lutkins’s beautiful brig.’ Now, Mr. Rutherford, Captain Screwton is satirical and severe to a degree, I do not therefore believe there was anything more than a mere accident in the matter; but I have never been driven by a commander since, and, between you and me, I never will—at least in Jamaica.”

CHAPTER IX.

WHILST the dinner-visitors prepared to go away, those who were staying at the Pen clustered about the carriages, exchanging jokes with their departing friends, amongst which, the gravel-pit, and the various accidents which had occurred there, played a conspicuous part. Afterwards they strolled about in the open air, now cool and refreshing, enjoying their cigars; here and there, some foolishly imprudent youth would sleep in the open air: the temptation to do

so was great, but the consequences were often serious.

They were, as usual, a merry set, and, although Ralph had just then little sympathy with their mirth, he repressed his feelings, joined heartily in the general tone of conversation, and was by no means the least facetious of the party.

“Rutherford,” said Captain Lutkins, taking him aside, “what was it that old Dawson was cramming into your ear after dinner? I saw his wall-eye frequently turned towards me. The stupid old fellow killed me a capital horse, and smashed my old vehicle to shivers. If I had not kept a bright eye to windward he’d have smashed me too, and served me right, for trusting the reins to such a blind old fool; and now that mischief-making croaker, Screwton, down at Port Royal, has persuaded the bald-headed old gaby that I did it on purpose, hoping to make a vacancy. Lord help his thick skull! What if I am first on the list for

promotion? between hair-brained expeditions and yellow fever, I am not likely to wait long for a vacancy. Old Dawson's 'Bourdelaïse' is but a crib of a craft, and I should have to turn her inside out to make a man-of-war of her. Any fool may see with half an eye that the old fellow might fall from the moon without damaging his skull, for it's all solid bone where the brains ought to be. I can allow poor, decrepid old Screwton considerable latitude, and can stand a joke as well as another, but he's going it rather too strong; I must pull him up."

Ralph laughed at this free and easy version of the story, but expressed no opinion; he could not but think that the general disposition to allude to the gravel-pit had led to this confidential communication from Captain Lutkins, who had previously taken no notice of him. They soon began to retire to the cots in the barrack. A private chamber would that night have been a great luxury to Ralph: he longed to be alone, for it had been

a harassing day to him ; but the dimensions of the Pen, the celebrated residence of the naval Commander-in-Chief in the West Indies, were far too limited to meet the demands of the Admiral's hospitality, and its sleeping apartments were so few that the juniors of the staff and the younger guests were fain to be content with what was not inappropriately called the barrack, a large half-furnished room in which were suspended some half-dozen sea-cots. But we will not describe minutely an apartment well and favourably remembered by many an old Jamaica stationer, and which in its palmy days was tenanted by an ever-flitting population of merry, thoughtless young fellows. Most probably our friend Ralph was the only inmate of the barrack who had that night sighed for solitude, but he was no weakling. He was to the last one of the most cheerful of the party, and slept afterwards as soundly as if his heart had been unscathed, though it certainly did occur to him next morning that

he had, though somewhat indistinctly, seen Julia waltzing with Lord George with infinite glee and spirit, lavishing her bright smiles upon her gay and handsome partner to an extent that Ralph was very far from approving, whilst his happy rival seemed to nod triumphantly towards him with an expression of countenance which continually said: "Didn't I tell you so, old fellow?"

Awaking with a start, he rubbed his eyes, and sat up. "Pshaw!" he said, "'twas but a dream."

After breakfast Rutherford was summoned to the Admiral's room, where he had a very gracious reception. The chief was pleased with his reports, commended all his proceedings, and shaking him cordially by the hand, congratulated him upon his good fortune in having performed so important a service to the Carterets, and was proceeding, as Ralph hoped, to announce his promotion, when the Secretary entered with papers.

"Remain at the Pen, Mr. Rutherford,"

the Admiral said. "I will not forget you ; but at this moment I am occupied with important business. I will see you again as soon as I can."

Ralph was obliged to retire with hopes instead of realities, which was tantalizing enough. He sought a shaded spot where he might at length commune with his own thoughts, and recal the series of adventures he had passed through within the last few days. He had been much favoured by fortune, and his mind would have been quite at ease but for that detestable waltz, commented upon in such glowing terms by his friend Carleton, the recollection of which disturbed his most delicious day-dream. But then he felt assured he would get a commission; and what a source of delight would that be to his adored mother, who had so long lived but for him, and for his sake had for years struggled with poverty and privations to find means to support, educate, and provide for him with a degree of skill and

energy, which her very limited means would otherwise have rendered impracticable. The devoted mother's purse, like the widow's cruse, had only been exhausted when its object was accomplished, for God's blessing was upon her exertions, and upon her prayers. Some unexpected supply had ever met her utmost need ; but the difficulties and privations of this true and faithful woman would now cease. His income would not only support himself, but he trusted he should also be able to assist her, for her health had been deeply injured by long residence in a situation where the air was extremely injurious to her. It had, however, given access to an endowed school for her boy ; and she had borne this, as well as her other difficulties, with untiring patience and humble submission. It had been her delightful task to instil pure, religious, and moral principles into the youthful mind of her boy, which was well constituted to receive the precious seeds.

Fain would Ralph have fixed his thoughts exclusively upon her who had always hitherto been the chief object of his serious thoughts, for he did not presume to associate Julia deliberately with his future hopes and plans. Was she not an heiress? whilst he was and ever must be a poor man. He shrank with instinctive repugnance from the possible imputation of interested motives, but in vain. He could no more exclude that fair girl from his day-dreams by simply willing it, than he could exclude the light of heaven by saying be thou converted into darkness. Ralph knew not how long he had indulged in this bewitching train of thought when he was suddenly aroused.

“ Please, Massa,” said a black servant, “ Misser Cartreet he come: he ask for Misser Rutfut, Massa.”

Ralph started to his feet—it was indeed his excellent friend, and joyful was the meeting; he brought gratifying accounts from Kingston, with kind greetings from Julia and

Laura—the whole family were anxious to see him. They had sent down to Port Royal for Shuldham, and having learnt that Ralph was at the Pen, he had himself hastened his purposed visit to the Admiral, intending to carry Ralph back to Kingston with him. Ralph was obliged to excuse himself, being under orders to remain at the Pen. Mr. Carteret had sent in his card, and they enjoyed a conversation, interesting to both, till the Admiral, having been able to disengage himself from business, came out to welcome his friend, and to congratulate him upon his providential escape.

“ We owe you many thanks dear Sir,” said Mr. Carteret, “ for the efforts you made in our behalf ; but it would have been all over with us, had it not pleased Providence to send our gallant young friend here so opportunely to the rescue. You will not be surprised that we are anxious to have him with us : I am charged by the ladies to solicit this favour from you.”

“ Well, Rutherford,” said the chief, laughing, “ I am so well satisfied with you, and so desirous to be in the good graces of your fair friends, that if I could be certain you really wished it I should be inclined to let you go.”

Ralph coloured highly as he bowed his thanks.

“ But remember,” resumed the Admiral, “ it can only be for two days. It is now Saturday, and I shall expect you here on Tuesday morning, when you shall find a commission ready for you, which I give with pleasure ; for you have well earned it. Your holiday will be short, but you will be a very lucky fellow if many such holidays fall to your lot. It would be useless to ask you to stay and dine, Carteret ; you have a much more attractive party waiting for you at home. Tell my young favourites that I have much pleasure in introducing to them Lieutenant Rutherford, that he may receive his first congratulations from lips which will

confer tenfold value on them. Remember Tuesday morning, Rutherford."

"Thanks, my dear Sir," said Carteret; "you send me home a happy man, and you will not be forgotten in our rejoicings. I would ask your sanction for bestowing upon the tender's crew some mark of my gratitude for the service they have so gallantly rendered me."

"Be it so," said the Admiral. "But I see," he added, smilingly, "my secretary is looking this way rather anxiously." And he shook hands with them both and retired.

Warm was the welcome which greeted their arrival at Kingston. Shuldham with Uncle Peter first met them; the good old man was delighted with his young friends—even Mrs. Carteret had become animated. She loved a scene, in which she could without trouble play a conspicuous part; and could really enact the anxious and affectionate mother with no inconsiderable skill upon a great occasion. Julia, radiant with joy, was

absolutely enchanting, especially in her tone and manner towards the happy Ralph. Laura and Shuldham were calm, but their happiness was not the less perfect.

Some time elapsed before the Admiral's kind message could be announced, when fresh congratulations followed. It was a gentle tumult of happiness, where each felt for all, whilst every one was conscious of some peculiar gratification. Rapidly—too rapidly—did those bright hours pass away: it would be a hopeless task to attempt to describe them; and Mr. Pepys himself, had he been there, would have sunk beneath it. But old Jemima's joy, when she saw Ralph, must not be left unrecorded. She seemed to have almost identified him with her darling Julia in her mind; and in her quaint but expressive language, Ralph felt that it was so, and loved the old woman dearly for it.

But Tuesday morning came, and bright eyes glistened with ill-suppressed tears, whilst

Ralph's manly spirit was sorely taxed to preserve even the appearance of firmness. But go he must.

As soon as Ralph arrived at the Pen on the Tuesday morning, he was summoned to the Admiral's presence.

"The character I received of you, Mr. Rutherford, from Captain Merivale (no bad judge), you have fairly borne out," said the Admiral; "and I have been considering how I could best put you in the way of serving yourself as well as your country, by making you at once a first Lieutenant, and chance has favoured me."

Ralph expressed his grateful acknowledgments.

"You know Mr., now Captain, Bromhead?" resumed the chief.—Ralph winced a little; the Admiral saw it, and had perhaps expected it. He continued: "Captain Bromhead is a brave and zealous officer. He takes the command of the 'Goelan;' one of her lieutenants has died of fever, which

makes a death-vacancy for you, entitled to immediate confirmation at home. The other lieutenant invalids, which enables me to put in one junior to you. The advantages of starting as a first Lieutenant with a man like Captain Bromhead, you will understand. A successful action may make you a Captain any day."

Ralph expressed his gratitude, for he felt keenly the consideration with which he had been treated by the Commander-in-Chief, although strong differences in habits and opinions led him to doubt how Bromhead and he should get on.

That officer having been announced, Ralph retired; and whilst waiting for his new Captain, he consoled himself for much apprehended discomfort, by the reflection that, however eccentric and rough, Bromhead was a seaman, and bent on distinguishing himself—qualities which cover a multitude of failings; but his reflections were suddenly disturbed by a gruff voice at his elbow:

“ Well, Mr. Rutherford, so you are to be my first Lieutenant, are you? We must get to work at once. We’ve no time to lose, as we sail to-morrow.”

“ To-morrow, Sir !” said Ralph ; “ that’s short notice.”

“ It is,” replied the Captain ; “ but the ship has been reported ready for sea. I have no faith in other men’s work, and should have liked a week’s rummage at her ; but needs must when the old—” nodding his head significantly towards the Admiral’s room—“ drives ; so I hope you are ready.”

“ Quite ready,” replied Ralph.

“ Well then jump into that old rattletrap with me.”

When the Captain had driven some time without having spoken, he nodded his head knowingly towards the celebrated gravel-pit as they passed it, and, with a hoarse chuckle, said :

“ There’s where our keen friend Lutkins missed fire the **other** night, as some say, though

I wish to believe that it was a mere accident ; but Lutkins is sharp, and old Dawson a regular flat, so there's no saying ; but now we are past it, do you take the reins. I want to look over my instructions. I shall have more than enough to do when we get down to Port Royal."

Ralph changed seats with the grimly-facetious Commander, and took the reins. Again they proceeded in silence, only broken by an occasional exclamation from the Captain, as he conned over the papers, uttering occasionally an oath or execration, sometimes in wrath and bitterness, sometimes in that rude spirit of facetiousness which was so peculiarly his own, his coarse features ever expressing the feelings of the moment. At times he scratched his unkempt head, especially when he was displeased with what he read, which was frequently the case ; for it would appear from his comments, that his instructions tied him up rather tight : and Captain Bromhead, who had commanded

small vessels, was well known to have a way and a will of his own.

“ I am an Admiralty man,” said the Captain, “ and don’t owe my promotion to the old fellow. He is no fool though ; but,” he added, with a wink, and an indescribably knowing twist of his eye, “ show me the instructions that I can’t pick a roving commission out of. But here we are, Mr. Rutherford, and the boat waiting.”

They rowed directly to the ‘ Gøelan,’ mustered her crew, and proceeded to inspect her, low and aloft.

“ We may as well know how things are,” said the Captain, “ though we must take them as they are for the present. Look into the magazine, Rutherford, and the arrangements for supplying the guns with powder in action. There’s a boat at the dockyard that I must do the old Commissioner out of, in place of that abominable yawl, and I have not a moment to spare.”

Ralph, left to himself, completed his

inspection, and was making his preparations for sailing.

“ A boat coming from the flag-ship, Sir.”

“ Who’s in her ?”

“ A Lieutenant, Sir.”

“ Carleton,” said Ralph, as the young nobleman sprang up the ship’s side, “ I congratulate you on your promotion ; to what ship are you appointed ?”

“ Why to that confounded ‘ Brisk,’ and we are to take convoy, and, what’s worse, we shall sail before the great ball at Kingston, where I had set my heart upon dancing with our fair friend. Confoundedly hard, isn’t it ; but it’s not quite certain, for some of the slow coaches may not be ready. How will Bromhead and you get on ? He’s a queer one, and, with your straight-laced fancies, it will be tough work ; I almost wish I could be here to see it.”

“ We shall see,” replied Ralph, calmly ; “ but he’s a keen cruiser, and will get into

action if he can, and that will make up for much."

"The Captain's coming, Sir," reported a mid.

"Well, I just came to shake hands with you, my good fellow," said Lord George, "as you are off so soon; good luck to you."

In the evening Shuldham came on board.

"I come," he said, "in the name of all our party at Kingston, who would fain have taken leave of you themselves, had it been possible. It is some consolation that you won't be gone long, for the Admiral will certainly give Captain Bromhead an opportunity of putting his ship to rights. Mr. Carteret will hope to hear from you, and the fair Julia, though she says little, droops, and evidently feels your sudden departure."

Ralph dispatched his acknowledgments by his friend, and his hopes to see them all before long. This visit of Shuldham's consoled him much. The 'Goelan' had

been ordered to cruise within a strictly specified range, to look out for marauders, who might lurk in the path of the convoy, which it was well known was about to sail.

But despatches arrived during the night, and a report soon spread that a large French fleet had arrived in the West Indies with troops. Captain Bromhead was ordered up to the Pen, and returned almost immediately with despatches for the Admiral on the Leeward Island station ; the 'Goelan' had been held in readiness, and started with the last of the land wind.

CHAPTER X.

A ZEALOUS, ambitious young Captain of a man-of-war, in his first command, fully believing that a cruise would afford him an opportunity of distinguishing himself, dreads the thought of a convoy or of despatches, and no man ever experienced this feeling more strongly than Captain Bromhead had done. He was a tall, slender, ungainly man, with a round, bullet head, which scarcely seemed to have been made for his body, particularly as he was bull-necked, with

large hands and feet, and a sort of shambling gait, in keeping with his coarse features, which unmistakably announced energy, firmness, and indomitable self-will, self-reliance, and self-love. A rough Northumbrian burr, accorded well with his countenance. He was not altogether negligent in his attire, and when in full dress there was a smirk in his face, peculiar to that state of things, in persons at once vain and awkward ; but there was even then always some point grievously neglected.

He was to have had a cruise, but in a very limited space, and with a definite object, and had been considering how he might best evade the restrictions imposed by his instructions upon his latitudinarian propensities, smiling scornfully at the vain ingenuity displayed by the Secretary, in obedience to a hint from the Admiral, to tie the Captain up tight, as he was a slippery one. Great therefore had been Bromhead's vexation, at having been so unexpectedly detained, when

a few hours would have placed him beyond the reach of recal ; but, on his arrival at the Pen, he found that a large French fleet had actually arrived in the West Indies, and that the ‘Goëlan’ was forthwith to approach what would, in all probability, prove to be the scene of hostilities on a magnificent scale ; for the Admiral was convinced that an English fleet would soon appear in pursuit of the enemy, and had evidently taken all his measures under that conviction. The Captain returned to Port Royal therefore with his despatches, rejoicing in his new destination, and, for once, the bearer of despatches was an object of envy to his brother officers.

To make a passage from Jamaica to Barbadoes, whither the ‘Goëlan’ was now bound, was no easy task ; for, although Barbadoes and the islands classed with it are always, even officially, denominated the *Leeward Islands*, they do, in fact, lie directly to windward of Jamaica and the rest of the

larger islands, Barbadoes being relatively to the trade-wind, the weathermost of the whole West Indian Archipelago, this being a very striking instance of a geographical misnomer.

But the passage proved unusually long, because Bromhead, in his impatience, instead of taking a circuitous route by which he might have availed himself of the prevailing winds, attempted a short cut. Provoked by the ill-success of this experiment, he became more than ever querulous and crabbed. At length a strange sail appeared. She was running before the wind, evidently an armed ship, and of most suspicious appearance. This was gall and wormwood to our irritable Commander, whose orders were to convey his despatches, with all possible speed, to Barbadoes, and on no account whatever to deviate from his course, not even to chase an enemy. This order admitted of no misconception, the more especially as the Admiral had, in presence of his Secretary

and Flag-Captain, explained the importance of his reaching Barbadoes in time to meet the expected English fleet there, that the Commander-in-Chief thereof might at once see what was the real available force on the Jamaica station, and how the ships were disposed of, and so be able to make his arrangements accordingly, sending his orders to Jamaica.

The appearance of this strange sail was most perplexing and irritating ; but, though Ralph felt this strongly, he could not but be amused at the odd and quaint manner in which his Captain displayed his vexation.

“By —— !” he said, as he withdrew his telescope from a long and intent examination of the stranger, who was half topsail down, “by —— ! she’s a Frenchman to a certainty ! only see, Rutherford, what immense top-gallant sails, out of all proportion to the head of the top-sail !”

“I do not think that so very decided, Sir,

and surely the cut of the topsail is rather English than French. How brown the canvas is !”

“ Ah ! that’s like you : because we can’t go after her, you choose to believe she’s not an enemy.”

“ I really think it extremely doubtful, Sir ; and, as we shall see no more of her, I perceive no advantage in tormenting myself with regrets which can avail nothing.”

“ Confound your coolness, Sir ! It makes me mad to hear you talk thus ! I tell you, Sir, I would rather be a jackass, and carry panniers, than beat about the seas with a tier of guns, and my hands tied by these infernal despatches !”

Bromhead turned sharp round as he spoke, and leaped from the gun on which he stood ; but in his haste and his wrath, the combined movement was imperfectly executed ; his foot slipped between the parts of the gun-tackle, and he fell heavily upon the

deck, wrenching the embarrassed leg severely, and striking his head violently against a shot-box. The latter part of the accident, though it sounded fearfully, he appeared to think little of; he scratched his head, but that was a habit with him. His leg was another matter. He was carefully raised up, whilst Ralph gently extricated the unfortunate foot, and the disabled chief was carried down to his cabin, muttering what appeared to every one to be cursings and execrations.

The Doctor having performed his office, and having declared that there was no fracture, Ralph entered the cabin to express his satisfaction that no bones had been broken.

“My best glass is broken to smash,” said the Captain; “a ten-guinea Dolland; but, what’s worse than all, I’m laid up with this infernal leg, and be d— to it!”

“I hope your head is not hurt, Sir; it struck the shot-box with great violence.”

The Captain smiled grimly and scornfully, whilst he rubbed the part in question.

“My head never takes any harm,” he said. “I only wish this cursed leg could bear half as much.”

But the Captain had been rather too lively whilst giving expression to this bright idea, and he writhed in agony. This was too much, and it brought forth such a torrent of oaths as really distressed Ralph, who looked at the sufferer with an expression of countenance which Bromhead perfectly comprehended.

“None of your nonsense, Mr. Rutherford. If you had felt half what I was then suffering, you’d have sworn too. It would have made a bishop swear !”

“I hope not, Sir,” said Ralph, calmly ; “nor do I see how oaths and execrations can alleviate pain !”

A fresh twinge produced a second volley of expletives worse than the first ; Ralph looked on in pity, not so much for his bodily

sufferings as for his impious folly. Brom-head read Ralph's feelings distinctly, and became positively enraged.

"D— your long faces and preaching looks," he said. "By G—, Sir, I'll say what I like, and do what I like, ay, and I'll swear as much as I like in my own ship, Sir! and who or what shall hinder me?" looking angry defiance.

This doughty declaration of his unshackled will appeared to have had a soothing effect upon the irritable potentate, for he looked up calmly in Ralph's face: "What should hinder me from swearing if I chose to swear?" he said.

"I, Sir, am not accustomed," replied Ralph, "to canvass, still less to criticise, the conduct of my superior officers; but as you ask me what should hinder you from swearing I will, without touching upon the higher principle by which we are bound to abstain from a sin to which great guilt attaches, and to which no possible temptation exists,

confine myself to a hindrance, the force of which, I know you will not dispute."

"Well, man, out with it. I don't like long yarns; but as I was fool enough to ask the question, I suppose I must listen to the answer."

"Do you not when you read the Articles of War, pronounce a heavy sentence of condemnation upon all who shall use impious or unseemly language in derogation of God's honour and to the corruption of good manners, especially enumerating oaths and execrations?"

"Bother!" said the impatient listener, "old woman's tales, mere words, like 'your affectionate friend' at the close of a navy board letter."

"Surely, Sir," said Ralph, "if every man could be authorised to apply such an argument to whatever portion of the Articles of War, it might suit him to transgress—"

But happily the colloquy was here broken off by the entrance of the surgeon, which Ralph was far from regretting.

The tediousness of their passage had at least one good effect, for Bromhead had recovered the use of his leg before he reached his destination. It was on the morning of the 4th of June, the King's birthday, that the 'Goëlan' at length made Barbadoes, and as she stood in on the starboard tack, hoping to fetch into Carlisle Bay, a bright vision appeared to windward, a fleet led by a noble three-decker, with a blue flag at the fore, came booming down with a strong sea-breeze, stunsails low and aloft. It was Nelson, with that gallant host of highly disciplined ships, which had so long with him watched the French fleet in Toulon, winter and summer. Many of them had not entered a harbour for two or three years, and having now in vain sought the enemy (who had escaped their vigilance) first in Egypt and then in other directions, had at length, guided by the marvellous instinct of their chief, crossed the Atlantic in pursuit of them, full of hope and confidence, though well

aware of their own great inferiority in numbers; but who could doubt of victory when Nelson led? It was a splendid sight, that veteran fleet following their gallant chief from clime to clime seeking a mighty foe, and now exulting to find themselves once more upon his traces, for the exhilarating fact had been communicated throughout the line by signals, as soon as it was positively ascertained that the French fleet, they had so long sought, was really in those seas. Many of the ships of the British fleet were commanded by officers already known to fame, and destined to be more conspicuously so hereafter.

Ralph Rutherford, young and enthusiastic, was enchanted to behold so near him that dark blue flag floating gracefully at the foretop-gallant mast-head of the magnificent ship so appropriately named the 'Victory.' The sight of that flag, brought to his mind the many glorious deeds of him, the emblem of whose presence it was. He thought of

the battle of the Nile, and resolved if possible to see the hero who had so long been the object of his enthusiastic admiration.

On they came—those gallant ships, as fresh and as bright after years of unintermitting toil as if they had just started from Spithead completed to perfection by the skill and resources of our great arsenal; yet had years passed since they had entered a port or seen a storeship. We dwell upon this, because we believe it to be one of the great distinctions between English and foreign fleets, which last, though admirably trained, severely drilled with much more cost and care lavished upon their armament more especially upon their small arm-department, could not as this and others of our British fleets have done, preserve their effective condition for years at sea.

The storms of the Gulf of Lyons had done their worst, winter after winter, upon Nelson's fleet, yet were they fresh and gay, and from their being painted in one uniform style, then a recent practice, there was an appearance of

concord and unity about them which conveyed an imposing idea of strength and power far beyond their material force. They were worthy of their chief.

“Gentlemen,” Nelson is reported to have said to his assembled captains, after having explained to them his very concise instructions, “should any man in presence of the enemy find himself under circumstances not provided for in these instructions, let him lay his ship fairly alongside an enemy’s ship of superior force, and he cannot have greatly erred.”

The impression made by the blue flag at the fore and the mighty train which followed it, long haunted Ralph’s mind, and the fatal event which so soon followed, to his bitter sorrow, served only to fix and to hallow it in his recollection.

Captain Bromhead had gone on board the ‘Victory’ with his despatches.

“A signal for all lieutenants, Sir,” reported a mid.

Rutherford seized the opportunity and an-

swered the signal himself to secure a slight chance of seeing Nelson ; the ' Victory's' quarter-deck was crowded with officers from the fleet in obedience to the last signal, and Ralph felt painfully that though so near to the Admiral he could have little hope of seeing him. Suddenly there was a dead silence, every one stopped short where he was, every hat was raised ; there is something almost solemn in the instantaneous unexpected arrest of busy tongues and active feet in a throng of young officers.

Lord Nelson smiled good-humouredly as he returned the general salute. He walked quickly along the deck, and took his station on the larboard, or weather-gangway, and commenced a rapid survey of his ships, with his hand raised to his forehead to shade his eye, and his head thrown back. He appeared to Ralph's excited view to be rather above than below the middle height, his figure spare, but muscular, or rather wiry. The empty sleeve, denoting a lost

arm, created a striking interest. The countenance, at which Ralph gazed intently whilst the Admiral was wholly occupied in observing ship after ship, was in a high degree peculiar ; the broad and lofty forehead, the straight and somewhat scanty hair, the pale face and highly intellectual expression, with a mouth which announced extraordinary firmness of character, united with kindness and gentleness of disposition, won his very heart ; but he was too much excited, as he often said afterwards, to have much faith in the correctness of his portrait, for he had accidentally been one of the nearest to him ; and Nelson, after having surveyed his fleet for an instant with evident satisfaction, turned his eye upon the ‘ Victory’s’ quarter-deck. Ralph almost fancied he was dreaming when he found himself invited by a slight gesture to advance. In an instant Ralph Rutherford stood by the side of Nelson, to get a momentary glimpse of whom he had so ardently longed. He stood in absolute conversation with Nelson,

whilst his blue flag fluttered proudly in the breeze, and all his gallant ships were clustered around him, panting to be led to the fight, indifferent to the numbers of the enemy, for they were part and parcel of Nelson. They had followed his flag for years, and stood prepared to follow it to the death. Rutherford was confused and abashed at the strange suddenness of the thing, and often afterwards spoke of the kind, considerate manner in which Nelson, in all the pride of high command, flushed with hopes of a new victory, surrounded by thousands devotedly attached to him, and ready, to a man, to rush upon certain destruction at the wave of his hand, condescended, without the slightest external mark of condescension, but gently and naturally to reassure the awe-stricken youth, whose admiration was so distinctly visible :

“What ship?” he asked, in a tone ineffably reassuring.

“The ‘Goelan,’ Sir—my Lord,” replied Ralph.

“Where is she?”—resuming his former attitude, and again shading his eye with his hand.

“There, my Lord,” replied Ralph, reassured, “there, on the ‘Superb’s’ weather-quarter.”

“I see,” he said ; “and now tell me how you will get your boat back to her under sail, through all these ships, with this breeze?”

But before Ralph could reply, Captain Hardy approached with papers in his hand. Nelson had evidently been expecting him, and whilst enjoying the cool, fresh breeze on the gangway, had beguiled his impatience by this little colloquy with Ralph ; yet, purely accidental and perfectly trivial though it was, the recollection of this little scene was ever fondly cherished by Rutherford, as one of the most interesting events of his life.

And within a few short months that noble spirit was to be quenched. It is true that Nelson died amidst a blaze of glory, for in his fall he crushed the combined fleets of

the enemies of his country, directed by the gigantic intellect of her most implacable foe ; and joyfully would he have sacrificed himself ten times over, to have insured such a consummation : but his zeal, his devotion to his country, have never been sufficiently appreciated. His followers, his sailors, those who knew him best, and the great body of the people of England, did him justice ; but whilst his failings have been trumpeted forth and exaggerated, his merits and his services have been forgotten by some who reaped the choicest fruit of his heroic deeds. For years did his monument stand neglected and unfinished in the greatest thoroughfare of London, a bitter but just reproach to his ungrateful country : for, whilst millions were ever forthcoming to support the wildest speculations, to which interested parties could contrive to give a plausible assurance of unusual profit, a few hundreds could not be found to complete Nelson's monument. Well might intelligent foreign-

ers express their astonishment: well might those who hated us express their delight, as they pointed to the mean and disgraceful boards which so long disfigured the monument erected to the glory of our great naval hero,—the Englishman who, as a naval officer, has no equal in ancient or in modern history.

CHAPTER XI.

RALPH having learned on board the flagship, to his great dismay, that the 'Goëlan' would be sent to England with Lord Nelson's despatches, found means to write a few hasty lines to Mr. Carteret, expressing his regret that his ship should have been so unexpectedly ordered to England, and begging that he might hear from Jamaica, as there would be but little chance of his returning thither. Having also written a line to Shuldham, he went back to the 'Goëlan,' in a state of excitement very unusual with him. Captain Brom-

head arrived soon after, in a terrible humour, stamping and swearing like a madman: in short, doing as he liked in his own ship.

“ Fill and make sail, Mr. Rutherford,” he said, “ and when you can weather the fleet, tack. More despatches and be d—d to them; you may take this coolly, but I can’t:” and having thus vented rage and disappointment, he dived down into his well-cabin, looking as sulky as he could look, and his was a countenance capable of great expression in that line.

Ralph had expected some such scene, for he fully sympathised with the Captain in his regret and mortification, at being compelled to separate so suddenly from that glorious flag, nothing doubting but that their more fortunate comrades who remained with Nelson, would soon participate in some brilliant achievement. But it was not so destined: for the enemy fled back across the Atlantic into European seas, as soon as they heard of Nelson’s arrival at

Barbadoes. No battle was then fought in the West Indies, and when at length the day of reckoning came, and Cape Trafalgar was immortalized by Nelson's crowning victory, and glorious death, few of his old ships who had so long followed him, and who had formed his fleet, when Ralph's admiration had been so powerfully excited by their warlike aspect—few of those had the good fortune to be present in the fight of fights : so capricious is the fortune of war !

The 'Goelan' having tacked and passed to windward of the fleet, her officers watched its every movement with deep interest, as their distance from it was fast increasing.

"Surely," said Ralph, "there are troops embarking. We shall be able to see how that frigate now about to quit the fleet will steer : I suppose for Martinique?"

"No," said the Captain, who had just come on deck. "She's steering far too much south for Martinique. Where can she be going ? but what's that to us poor devils ? We shall have no hand in the fun."

As they were now rapidly losing sight of the fleet, it was extremely provoking that this, the last indication they could hope for, of the immediate object of the great chief, should not have been more explicit. Why send his leading frigate so far to the southward? and this perplexing question furnished them with an interminable subject of discussion during the passage to England; not the less vehemently argued that there was not the slightest ground for any one of the many opinions adduced, nor the slightest chance of having any light thrown upon the subject.

Twice they saw suspicious-looking vessels steering for the West Indies, and bitterly did Bromhead curse his hard fate that, fettered with despatches, he could not chase. Whether from vexation that he should only have been permitted a momentary glimpse at what he felt convinced was the prelude to a glorious victory, which conviction had certainly ruffled his irritable spirit more than a little; or whether the severe blow upon his head,

when he had fallen, and of which it had been his pleasure to speak so lightly, might have been the origin we know not, but the Captain was attacked by fever, and for a considerable time was confined to his cabin, where he lay growling and grumbling to a degree which aggravated and probably prolonged his illness ; and this in his present mood, by confining the outpourings of his wrath to his immediate attendants, was perhaps a boon to those on deck,—not that Bromhead was heartlessly severe, either with officers or men, indeed his well-known fighting propensities, which he contrived to make strikingly obvious on all occasions without being a positive braggart, covered in their eyes a multitude of sins, and he was not generally disliked. An officer who had no particular objection to being sworn at now and then, or rudely jeered at, might serve satisfactorily enough with Bromhead, if he knew his duty, and would do it, especially if he could enjoy or affect to enjoy a coarse joke occasionally at

his own expense; for the Captain's jokes, though often sharp, and always shrewd, were never very refined.

It was a singular trait in Bromhead's character, that he had an almost insuperable aversion to writing. He would not even write his own letters, when it was possible to avoid it. His very signature was an illegible scrawl. Ralph had a suspicion that his aversion to writing arose from a conscious defect in the art of orthography; but Bromhead was a man of good family, and, moreover, though glib enough on ordinary occasions, and especially when he was doing as he liked in his own ship, was as shy and awkward as a country girl when he had occasion to address a few simple words, even to his own ship's company publicly.

At length he emerged once more from his close dark cabin, delighted to enjoy light and air. He was much pulled down in person, between the disease and the doctor, but he at once showed that his spirit remained unsub-

dued. A strange sail had been in sight right a-head for some time ; it was now reported to him that she was steering the same course as himself.

“D—m all strange sails !” he muttered. “What’s the use of strange sails, when one can’t chase ’em ? May ten thousand double-distilled c—s light on those infernal despatches.”

They gained fast upon the vessel a-head. She was pronounced to be a merchant ship, but Bromhead would neither look at her, nor speak of her. About midnight it fell calm. They had ran out of the breeze, a common occurrence, especially when approaching the Western Islands, from which they were now at no great distance. The night was very dark, though fine, but when the day broke the stranger was not far from them ; which was the natural consequence of her having first reached the limit of the breeze. Ralph was sent to board her, for she had hoisted

English colours. He was hailed as he approached her in excellent English.

“For God’s sake! don’t come alongside,” said a man dressed like a ship Captain; “we have the yellow fever on board to a frightful extent.”

“Bah!” replied Rutherford, “yellow fever or black fever, you won’t stop me.”

He sprang up the side; and the vessel proved to be an English West Indiaman, in the possession of French captors. They were quickly removed, and an English crew put into her, by which time the breeze had worked its way up, and they resumed their course. Bromhead was amused at having made a recapture, in spite of his despatches, and soon after they arrived at Spithead.

“Sir,” said Ralph to the Captain, as he was stepping into his boat to land, “so young an officer as I am will not be permitted to remain here as first Lieutenant in England. I have not been home for some years, and

would gladly spend some little time with my friends."

"I shall be at the Admiralty," replied Bromhead, good-humouredly, "and I dare say I shall be able to arrange it for you; though, after all, notwithstanding your d—d straight-laced fancies, I shall be sorry to part with you." And the smile with which he offered his hand to Ralph, improved his looks wonderfully.

The kindly feeling was mutual, for much as they differed upon most points, each still found in the other much that he could professionally admire.

"That fellow Rutherford," muttered the Captain to himself, on his way to the shore, "would be a regular trump, if he wasn't such an infernal psalm-singer; but I'll have no methodists in my ship, and be d—d to the whole kit of them."

Mrs. Rutherford, soon after Ralph had left her to embark in his first ship, had gladly quitted a residence so injurious to her

health, and a home now so solitary, so fraught with recollections of past happiness with her boy ; for amidst all her trials, and privations, sufferings from ill-health included, a blessing had been upon her works and ways. Many a proud and prosperous dame, looking down with scorn, perhaps with derision, upon the humble and laborious life of the widowed gentlewoman, would have seen in Mrs. Rutherford's lot, had her eyes been opened to realities, much to be envied. Religion is the precious solace which cheers and consoles virtuous poverty, and undeserved misfortune. It is the want of it which throws a blight on many a gilded saloon, crowded with gay and glittering fools, the labour of whose life it is to wear the semblance of happiness in the eyes of others, without even believing in its existence, save when for some fleeting moment they may feel delightfully conscious of having excited the envy or jealousy of some weak brother, less exalted, less wealthy, or less gifted than themselves. And this is the

fool's paradise, to enter which such strenuous efforts are made—such heartburnings are endured; not for any real satisfaction that struggling candidates can hope to find in the cold endurance of their presence, in scornful circles which disdain them; but that whilst submitting to well-earned contumely, they may in turn mortify their unsuccessful competitors, their very dear friends; be boasting of the flavour of the forbidden fruit, though it be in reality to them as dust and ashes. But whilst this insane mania to herd with classes above them, which is purely an English disease, agitates fearfully, and often ruinously, all classes amongst us, there are still those in every rank who pity the miserable delusion, and wend their way contentedly in their own station. Their ambition takes a loftier flight,—aiming at realities, and not at shadows.

Mrs. Rutherford had no sooner become free to seek a more healthy situation, than she accepted the long-urged invitation of her old school friend, Lady Evandale, like

herself, a widow, with one child, but rich. Neither time nor distance had cooled their early attachment, which had been sustained by correspondence. Sir Martin Evandale had died some years before the period at which we have arrived, and Lady Evandale, as the sole guardian of his young heiress, had devoted herself to her maternal duties. Edith, now sixteen, had received an excellent education. The wealthy and beautiful widow had not been unsought, but it had soon become clear that she was not to be won.

Her residence, Bewdley Lodge, seated in a charming country, on the south coast of England, was a handsome and commodious family mansion, but not large ; nor were the ornamental grounds attached to it extensive, but they were strikingly beautiful, admirably kept, and bore evident proofs of the good taste of the presiding authority. Bewdley Lodge was, in fact, a country house, in the style so exclusively English, for it is to be seen in no other country. The Englishman who has been

doomed to roam the wide world through, for years upon years in his country's service, when at length he reaches once more the land in which his soul delights, stops before a seat like Bewdley Lodge, and whilst he gazes fondly upon one of the many peculiarities of Old England, his heart expands with unselfish joy, exulting that he is an Englishman.

And is it not equally strange and painful to observe, how often it happens that the possessor of so enviable an inheritance, accompanied by ample means for rational enjoyment, should become cloyed with advantages he never laboured for, and knows not the value of his undeserved blessings?

Happily the lady of Bewdley Lodge was far superior to such follies. She maintained a handsome but unostentatious establishment, complete and consistent in all its parts—another pure Anglicism, by no means unimportant; for as a prevailing fashion, it tells of well-regulated minds and habits.

The meeting of the friends was delightful

to both, yet there was something grave and solemn about it. Some slight reminiscences of the more striking and more important events which had chequered the long period of their separation, could not but recur to their minds, too many of them fraught with painful reflections, whilst each beheld in the other the traces which time and care had equally impressed upon herself. Still it was a joyful meeting, but like all earthly joys tempered with sadness.

Mrs. Rutherford was now happily, in a great degree, relieved from those oppressive cares and labours, during the long continuance of which she had but too often been compelled to look forward with apprehension to a future of continually increasing difficulties, to contend successfully with which she had sometimes feared must be impossible. The air of Bewdley, too, proved beneficial to her health, while the society of intellectual friends cheered and diverted her. It was long since she had enjoyed anything com-

parable to it, and she was soon able to mix a little with friendly neighbours, who partook of the hospitalities of the Lodge. She received frequent letters from Ralph who wrote in high spirits, being delighted with his profession, and she shared the maternal cares of her old friend, and the affections of Edith.

Mrs. Rutherford felt deeply grateful for the blessings which had so richly rewarded the implicit faith, and untiring energy, with which she had been enabled to meet and to overcome trials so severe, and so far beyond her natural strength or apparent means, but which thus met, had served to develop both her own character, and that of her boy. Fain would Lady Evandale have prevailed upon her friend to take up her abode permanently at the Lodge, but Mrs. Rutherford, like all high-spirited, right-minded people, loved independence, loved to be entirely mistress of her own time and occupations, loved to commune with her own heart in solitude ;

and, much as she was attached to her friend and to Edith, she availed herself of an accidental opportunity to hire a small detached cottage, at the corner of Bewdley Green. By the road it was a long half-mile from the Lodge, but as nothing but a shady lane intervened between the little garden behind the cottage, and a plantation which bounded on that side the enclosure surrounding the Lodge, the distance by that route was very much less, and the intercourse between the friends continued to be frequent and familiar. One of the chief reasons alleged for declining to remain permanently at the Lodge, had been the probability of Ralph's returning home ; but years passed away and he came not. At length he had been suddenly ordered to the West Indies on promotion, through the influence of Captain Merivale, under whose command he had repeatedly distinguished himself. Even the prospect of his speedy advancement could not altogether reconcile the anxious mother to what apparently not

only exposed him to a baneful climate, but would also once more defer his long-expected visit indefinitely. Months passed away, and the widowed mother could not but mourn over her disappointments and anxieties ; for reports had become rife of enemy's fleets at sea, and of expected battles ; and more recently it had been stated that the French fleet had certainly proceeded to the West Indies.

She sat alone one afternoon silently pleading for strength to meet these new trials, at which she could not but repine, when the girl who was her sole attendant entered with a letter. The amount of postage told her that it could not be from abroad. She seldom received, and little cared to receive any letters but those from Ralph, but she extended her hand listlessly to receive it, and absolutely started to her feet when she recognised the well-known character, and the Portsmouth post-mark. Her trembling hands almost refused their office ; but tearing it open, she read :

“ My dearest mother,

“ I have just time to tell you I have arrived here quite well, and that I hope to be able to come to you in a few days. I have been promoted, and have since met with more than one serious disappointment. Judge how I long to be with you, and to talk over ten thousand things with you.

“ God bless you, my dearest mother.

“ Your affectionate son,

“ RALPH RUTHERFORD.”

This was indeed happiness beyond her most sanguine expectations : and she had been complaining, and repining, at the very moment that the wish nearest her heart was fulfilled. She wept and prayed, offering up a wild incoherent thanksgiving, but it came from the heart.

Her happiness now was scarcely susceptible of increase, yet was it enhanced by the heartfelt congratulations expressed by Lady

Evandale and Edith, who chanced to come to the cottage an hour afterwards.

More circumstantial letters followed : and a few days after, on the promised evening, when the agitated mother had long sat counting the weary minutes, and impatiently watching the lingering clock, wheels were heard, and in one instant she felt herself in the arms of that son, who had been the unceasing object of her fondest affection, and had both richly deserved and amply repaid it.

When the first tumult of joy subsided, Ralph looked upon his mother with astonishment.

“ How glad I am,” he said earnestly, “ that I find you, my dearest mother, looking far better, nay positively younger, than when I left you. How often have I figured you to myself as pale and suffering, whilst I longed to see you once more.”

The eyes of the delighted mother were fixed upon him while he thus fondly addressed her, but her heart was too full for speech.

Could this be her boy ? her child, a stalwart figure six feet high, bronzed by tropical suns ! Yes ! there was the same ineffably affectionate smile, the same tone and manner to her, however he was changed to others ; he was to her still the same gentle considerate boy : the living image of one whose untimely fate she had ever deeply deplored ! But if the thoughts that passed so rapidly through the mind of the widowed mother had been tinged with sorrow,—such is ever the case, more or less, on the most joyful events, with those who having seen much of life, are at all capable of reflection—she was not the less happy, nor the less grateful for the blessing now so unexpectedly vouchsafed her : the tears which flowed fast from her eyes, were tears of gratitude, of love.

Such scenes are less rare, than is generally supposed ; but the feelings they call forth are too subtle, too delicate to be described. The entrance of Sally with the little tea equipage, scarcely interrupted their eager conversation.

Nothing had been changed, and Ralph looked with delight, almost with fondness, on the well-known urn, hissing upon a table equally familiar to him, garnished with the cakes, which he had for so many years, when a child, regarded as a treat. What visions of the past do such trifles call forth !

The most sumptuous feast could not have presented the attractions of that simple repast ; every portion of which Ralph well knew had been scrupulously and even jealously prepared for him by her whose delightful task it now was to minister to his comfort, and rejoice at his presence.

There was a magic power in all around him ; and they had an evening of calm enjoyment, never surpassed either before or after, and in the course of it the chief occurrences of his career were again and again dwelt upon, whilst the fond mother wept and smiled, as the passing incidents dictated. At last they were not a little surprised to find that it was very unusually late ; and then the

mother and her son once more enjoyed the high privilege of family prayer, with grateful hearts.

Ralph was enchanted with his neat latticed chamber, with its simple furniture, so scrupulously neat, and the snow-white linen, redolent of fragrant herbs.

“And this is home, sweet home,” he murmured, as his head pressed his pillow. And he slept till, beneath the bright morning sun, the twittering of birds, and other unwonted rural sounds aroused him, and throwing open the casement he inhaled the rich perfume of a neighbouring clover field, mingled with the grateful odour of the clematis and honeysuckle.

It was yet early, the dew was on the ground, whilst flower and herb were richly garnished with nature's gems, for it was a calm, still, soft morning in early autumn. The fields were still loaded with rich crops, and the fruit-trees bent beneath the golden produce of a genial season. Ralph in the full

enjoyment of health and strength, with a light heart and a pure conscience, looked forth upon the bounties of Providence which surrounded him, with as much pleasure as if all had been his own. He envied no man, and when as he strolled into the little garden, that dear one so loved, so honoured, approached with light and joyous step, her countenance radiant with affection, he felt as he sprang forward to meet her, that he too had his full share of earthly bliss.

Mrs. Rutherford soon began to speak of her dear and excellent friend, whose society, as Ralph well knew, had been her chief solace during his protracted and wearisome absence. Lady Evandale and Edith came early by the accustomed path to congratulate their friend, and to welcome one whose whole career was familiar to them, and in whom they felt a deep interest. His mother's friends were to Ralph as old and dear companions, and soon they were all on the same familiar footing.

“What have we here?” said Edith, as a pretty pony phaeton stopped at the little gate which separated the cottage from the village-green, for the residence of Mrs. Rutherford was not sufficiently dignified to have a drive up to the door. All admired the plain but well-appointed little equipage.

“Pardon me, my dearest mother,” said Ralph, colouring highly, “but amidst so much happiness, I had really forgotten to beg your acceptance of this humble turn-out, in which I hope to enjoy many a pleasant drive with you.”

Mrs. Rutherford was highly gratified. It was the only personal comfort she needed, and to owe it to the affectionate consideration of her boy, whose presence would impart a tenfold value to it, was a most welcome obligation. Until her first great misfortune had crippled her means, she had been accustomed to have such a carriage at her command, and now bright days seemed to come once more. Tears filled her eyes, as she pressed the hand of her son in silence.

Time passed on ; the cottage and the lodge were more than ever united ; Ralph and his mother, in the full possession of tranquil domestic enjoyment, were never before so little disposed to reflect on the past, or to question the future. We must here leave them awhile ; other and far different scenes await us.

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN BROMHEAD, when he returned from leave of absence (the refit of the *Goelan* having been nearly completed), was exceedingly annoyed and irritated to find that three of his best seamen had disappeared, or, as was reported officially to him, had deserted. Having first vented his wrath in his usual way, and finding little satisfaction in that, he set about investigating the circumstances of each man's case with his wonted energy and sagacity; and having ascertained that one of the absentees, a pressed man, not long in the

ship, had contrived to get most of his clothes on shore before he disappeared, leaving nothing of any value behind him, whilst the other two, on the contrary, who had been long in the ship, and to whom pay and prize-money were due, which would have been forfeited by desertion, had not even taken a change of clothing with them, but had left their kit in perfect order, he naturally inferred that the two last men could not have entertained any deliberate intention to desert, though the other man clearly had.

It had been long rumoured that a regular system of crimping, or kidnapping seamen from ships of war, existed at Portsmouth, the great rendezvous for outward-bound merchant ships, which were frequently collected there by hundreds, waiting either for a convoy, or for a fair wind ; and so arbitrarily did the Government impress every seaman they could lay hold of, that merchant ships of the highest value, bound on long voyages, were obliged to pay large sums to

crimps, who could clandestinely convey seamen to them. These were mostly deserters from men-of-war, tempted by triple wages, and love of change; but as the supply was frequently insufficient, other measures of a more violent character were adopted by the crimps, though no one had as yet succeeded in detecting the infamous system.

Bromhead concluded that his two men must have been entrapped, and, aided by the civil power, he made strenuous efforts to discover the guilty parties, and though he did not succeed in this, he discovered quite enough to satisfy himself that kidnapping, when men were in greater request than usual, was certainly practised to a considerable extent. Strong suspicion fell upon one Scraggs, an idle, dissolute fellow, who was known to spend much money in low dissipation, without any honest means of procuring it. He was a notorious bully, but was too wary to expose himself to detection; whilst his confederates gained too much money by

him, and stood too much in awe of him (he being a professed prizefighter) to dare to betray him.

Bromhead was a resolute, persevering man not easily baffled. There was an East India convoy about to sail, in charge of the *Galatea*. There was every appearance of an easterly wind, and several of the Indiamen were known to be dangerously short-handed.

“Now’s my time to catch the rascals,” said Bromhead, thoughtfully; but as he deemed it probable that after his late proceedings he might be watched, he resolved to go to work warily.

He dined on shore as usual, and quitting the ‘Crown’ in disguise, soon after dark, hired a wherry to put him on board the *Royal William*, the guard-ship, at Spithead, fearing if he had gone straight to his own ship in her, the waterman, recognising him, might have his suspicions excited; for the watermen must necessarily have been the chief actors in the kidnapping trade. Having

dismissed his wherry, he made himself known to the commanding officer of the guard-ship, and requested to be put on board the 'Goelan;' his intentions he had not communicated to any one, which he justly deemed to be the best mode of proceeding in such matters. He then set off in his gig, followed at a small distance by two other boats, all moving leisurely, and without any appearance of connection or concert; each taking up a prescribed position between the Motherbank, where the Indiamen lay, and the harbour's mouth, with their boat-heads in-shore, by way of being as little conspicuous as possible to boats from the harbour, and at the same time heading the right way for an advantageous start in pursuit of boats coming from the shore, who would have to turn completely round, when they might take an alarm, before they could fly, which would prove no inconsiderable advantage in a short race.

About midnight, a large wherry, with four

skulls, was seen rapidly approaching ; but her crew must have kept a sharp look out, for though Bromhead's boats made no movement, the wherry had scarcely been clearly made out by them, when she turned short round, and rowed for South Sea Beach, with so much energy, that the cutters, with their utmost exertions, could scarcely keep way with her ; the gig alone was gaining slowly upon the chace ; but she reached the beach, and her crew, leaping on shore, had disappeared in the dark, before Bromhead, with all his exertions, could lay her alongside.

His zealous and enterprising spirit was, however, richly rewarded ; for, at the bottom of the wherry, in a state of complete stupefaction, lay two powerful active young fellows, clothed in filthy rags, one of whom was recognised as a well-behaved maintop-man of the 'Goelan.' The other was a stranger. It was, however, late on the following day before they were sufficiently recovered to be able to give any information respecting what

had happened to them. Even then, all they knew was, that having been persuaded by a very *nice gentleman*, on the previous evening, to enter a house, where he offered to stand treat; they, not being very sober at the time, drank what was given to them, and recollected nothing more.

After a long search they found the house which, however, had been already stripped and deserted. It was soon ascertained that it had been in the occupation of a man of bad character, named Balders, who kept also a small public-house of ill repute, at the back of the Point, called the 'Moll o' the Wad.' The constables went in search of him, but he was nowhere to be found.

This Balders, a sleek, plausible, smooth-tongued fellow, had formerly been confidential clerk to one of the most respectable tradesmen in the High Street, whom he had long plundered with impunity in a small way. The fear of losing a good salary, and the dread of punishment, would probably have

deterred him from attempting anything farther ; but who, having once entered upon a vicious career, can say, thus far will I go, and no farther ? The tempter laughs at such resolutions, proffers his delusive bait at the appropriate moment, and secures his victim. Balders fell into the snare, which so often allures knaves of his calibre and temperament to destruction. He became slavishly attached to a worthless woman ; his cautious, petty roguery could not support her extravagance ; the infatuated man was induced by the fear of being discarded by her to tamper with the books and accounts confided to him, and thus to rob his master of considerable sums. He was now once more in high favour, and enjoyed with trembling apprehension a precarious, unstable course of profligacy, the only reward to which such a reprobate could aspire ; but every demand for more money was now enforced by hints of the very superior generosity of his detested rival—the bully Scraggs, who was feared quite as much

as he was hated by Balders. Thus goaded, he ventured upon such dangerous measures that he was detected and dismissed. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately for him, he was not punished further, as publicity might have injured his master's credit.

The discarded culprit having lost his character as well as his salary, had taken the 'Moll o' the Wad,' where thoughtless seamen attracted by fiddlers and uproarious jollity, when sufficiently intoxicated, were robbed, often of considerable sums, stripped, and cast into some shed, or in the summer upon some heap of refuse, astonished when they awoke to find themselves penniless and in rags. In these shameful practices Balders made much money occasionally, and the whole thing suited him. There was neither labour nor danger in it, but his gains were precarious, and the insatiate harpy, whose drudge he had become, still cried for more, and when he had it not, reproached him as a paltry, mean-spirited coward, telling him in bitter scorn to

take a lesson from Scraggs, who never wanted for money. This was a cruel mode of urging Balders, for Scraggs, of whom he was desperately jealous, was a bold and reckless villain, whose practice it was not only to rob and strip his victims, but to drug and then literally to sell them in a state of stupefaction to merchant ships in great distress for want of a few good hands, who were compelled to pay largely for them, and to ask no questions. It was not that Balders felt any scruples of conscience about entering into this infamous traffic, but he felt himself unequal to it, for he must have as confederates, a bold and unscrupulous set of rogues, whom it would be necessary to keep in subjection. This was possible enough to Scraggs, a powerful man, a bully and a prize-fighter, who was a dangerous fellow to resist, or to disobey, and one who, in disputed cases of sharing profits, helped himself without ceremony to the lion's share. How was Balders, with his weakly body and dastard

spirit, to control such confederates? But there was no escape for him. Goaded to the terrible task for which he was so unqualified, by one who despised him, he hired a small obscure house, with a back entrance opening upon the harbour, and commenced operations upon Scraggs's principle.

His first attempt was eminently successful. A seaman just returned from five years' foreign service had rigged himself out in high style. He had two huge silver watches with large silver chains and seals, one in each fob. Round his neck he wore a heavy silver chain, with a boatswain's call attached to it. For two days he had driven about in a post-chaise, whilst a second chaise followed with his hat and stick. He stopped every now and then before a public-house, and taking up his call piped belay, which was understood to indicate Jack's will and pleasure, that none present were to pay for anything they might call for, so long as he, Jack, remained in the house, the post-boys being encouraged to call for

what they liked. He then after a time piped heave and a-weigh, paid the reckoning and departed.

Many sharks watched the rich prey, but a lynx-eyed female companion was the dragon who guarded the treasure ; and as it appeared that no given quantity of liquor could completely intoxicate this seasoned toper, he continued to circulate freely. Balders who had watched him closely, had the singular good fortune to find him reeling about quite alone soon after dark. The dragon, perhaps, had secured all she could hope for, and had abandoned her prey ; or had, more probably, tippled too much to be able to proceed. Balders soothed, and flattered, and cajoled his victim, led him to his lair ; and when the poor fellow, late on the following morning, awoke on board a Guernsey privateer, running down Channel before a strong easterly wind, enveloped in a ragged old jacket and trowsers, he at first thought he was dreaming, and called lustily for grog ;

but the sad reality soon forced itself upon him : he was a deserter, and had to begin the world again under a new name.

The produce of this nefarious deed, set Balders up for some time, and he began to flatter himself that he had found an inexhaustible mine of wealth ; for men of his stamp are easily elated, and still more easily depressed, by the freaks of fortune. But very soon Balders's treasury was once more getting low. There had been no very urgent demand for men lately, and no men-of-war had been paid off. Anxious and dispirited, for his reception in Prospect Row was assuming a doubtful character, he strolled up and down at the sally port : it was upon the stairs there, and when the tide was out, on the adjoining shingly beach, that officers coming from their ships at Spithead usually landed, and it was there that boats waited for officers about to return to their ships.

The day was cold, wet, and windy ; the only boat at the beach was a remarkably

well appointed pinnace. It was when boats waited for officers in bad weather, that the crimps had the best chance of success, for it was a tedious and disagreeable duty. A narrow strip of shingly beach alone intervened between the boat and an obscure intricate part of the town, abounding with places of concealment ; and if the Mid of the boat was careless or inattentive, a man suddenly leaping out of the boat was lost sight of in an instant. Pursuit was hopeless, and if imprudently attempted, very probably ended in the loss of one or two more men.

Balders gradually approached the boat, his appearance was quiet and respectable ; but in vain he continued his stroll in the wet and the cold, which he detested. The Mid of the boat was vigilant, and the crew quiet. He was on the point of giving up his hopeless projects, when he heard the coxswain, a remarkably fine young fellow, and of course, as Balders well knew, a prime seaman, or a petty officer—in short, a prize of the first

water, ask the Mid leave to land for ten minutes. The youngster looked at his watch, and nodded assent in a way that showed unbounded confidence in the applicant, merely saying, "Don't be more than ten minutes Brady, for recollect we are never permitted to wait for any officer beyond his appointed time. You must be punctual."

The skulking villain met honest Brady, as he was hastening up, and offered to show him a quiet respectable house close by, where he would immediately be served. He led his unsuspecting victim to the house he had taken for the express purpose; he installed him forthwith into a comfortable seat by a blazing fire, for Brady was shivering with cold and wet, and a tumbler of hot brandy grog was ordered to be brought immediately by his kind and assiduous guide. But some minutes had elapsed, and the grog appeared not. Brady having dried and warmed himself, became alarmed lest he should exceed his ten minutes, and rose to depart without

his grog, but as he was stepping quickly over the threshold a rummer was presented to him ; he swallowed its contents hastily, and became almost instantaneously a helpless prisoner in the hands of the subtle and villanous crimp.

In vain the boat waited whilst the name of Jack Brady resounded far and near. He came not, and the boat was at length obliged to return to the ship without him. It was a strange—a mysterious event, but no one in the *Galatea* believed that Jack Brady had deserted.

“ Honour amongst thieves,” like all the popular proverbs, has some apparent foundation to rest upon, for wherever an association exists, however villanous its object may be, there must be some one point or other on which its members can rely upon each other. Such reliance is indispensable to the existence of any association, though in reality it rests upon no point of honour or principle : it is merely an unwilling homage to truth. When a valuable

seaman or petty officer, like Brady, had been kidnapped, as was now the case, a very high price would be demanded for him when he was shipped, and freely paid merely upon the word of a villanous crimp; for the unhappy victim thus bought and sold in a state of unconsciousness in the dark, could show no proof of his seamanlike qualifications. It was necessary, therefore, to depend upon the word of the vilest of criminals, one avowedly such, a crimp, a man stealer; yet was the wretch's testimony rarely false, or it would have compromised the whole tribe of crimps, and destroyed their trade, and the rogues thus injured would have shown no mercy to the traitor.

Encouraged by his continued success, especially by the capture of poor Brady, for whom he received a considerable sum, Balders became more than ever extravagant, and as long as his good fortune lasted, his lavish expenditure earned him a cordial welcome from the arbitress of his fate. He was thus

for a time in high favour, but the penetration and pertinacity of Bromhead had at once struck a deadly blow at his short-lived prosperity. His confederates, too, had secured to themselves an undue share of the profits, for they stood in no awe of Balders. His evil genius still craved for more money, and when Bromhead's discoveries had completely ruined the infatuated dupe, he flew penniless as he was, to his most dangerous enemy, and not daring to disclose the extent of his misfortunes, told her that he was in trouble, and asked her to conceal him for a day or two. But his agitated manner excited her suspicions. She affected great readiness to assist him, and shut him up in a closet, for she occupied but one room in a small tenement looking upon the ramparts, in consequence of which there were no prying opposite neighbours, and the houses on both sides being of much the same character, their inmates paid little or no attention to the proceedings of their neighbours.

Balders was rather startled when he heard her lock and bolt the closet door, but she assured him, when he faintly remonstrated, that it was necessary for his safety during her absence, as she was obliged to go out for a short time. She then departed for the purpose of ascertaining what Balders's situation really might be, resolved to cast him off, if, as she suspected, he was in any serious danger or difficulty.

For several hours Balders was left in a most painful state of terror, immured in his small close prison, amidst a heterogeneous assortment of odds and ends. He had been too much hurried and frightened to have any thought of refreshment for many hours before he had sought refuge here, and he now began to feel faint with fear and exhaustion. Talk of the misery of hope deferred, what is that to the agony of suspense felt by this wretched creature for hours? and latterly every minute had seemed to him to be an hour. He had endured hunger, thirst, want

of air, dread of treachery and of arrest, and, seared as his conscience was, it now awoke to torment him.

After many false alarms, at length he really heard an approaching footstep. A gleam of joy, not unmixed with fear, arose as he recognised the well-known step; but another and a heavier tread followed it closely: it was a man's. His heart sank within him. Could she have betrayed him? Was it an officer coming to seize him? There was for a moment, a shuffling of chairs; then all was silent. Never did trembling caitiff at the bar await his sentence with more fear than Balders awaited the issue of the silence. It was broken by a voice which struck him with increased terror and abhorrence.

“The curse of Crummel light upon the blundering scoundrel! *He* indeed carry on a trade, which requires both skill and courage. Why he began by setting an example which made my rascally understrappers mutinous,

and he has wound up by betraying all the secrets of the trade.”

The speaker paused rather from exhaustion of breath, than of wrath.

The wretch in the closet trembled with rage and fear, nor was the woman less alarmed, for should a discovery take place, there was no saying what turn the brutal rage of the drunken bully might take. Turning round to her, he resumed in a tone of reproach :

“ It has often been a wonder to me how a woman of spirit like you, could have anything to say to such a thing as Balders, a regular sneak, and no man.”

All this was Balders doomed to hear, and the speaker was his rival Scraggs, the man he hated and feared.

The woman still more alarmed at the ferocious aspect and manner of her formidable guest, felt the necessity of soothing him at all risks.

“ I never had much to say to the poor

spiritless fool," she replied in a faint voice, for she could not but recollect that more than one pair of ears were attentively listening; "but what was a poor lone woman to do? He was an easy managed creature and generous with his money. I hope they won't hang the poor devil; but as for my caring for such a sneak as Balders, especially when you disliked him so much, you know better than that, Ben."

The conference was here interrupted—a light step was heard upon the stair, and a gentle tap at the door followed.

"Come in," said the woman; "it's only a milliner's girl with a bonnet," she added. "Put it on the table, Jane."

The girl obeyed and retired.

"It may be as you did not care for Balders," replied the unwelcome visitor sullenly, and not very civilly, as soon as the door was closed; "but it is reported that he has been here continually, and they *do* say

that the officers are coming here to look for him."

Balders, who had been listening in agony to this dialogue, was so completely thrown off his guard by its alarming conclusion, that he could restrain himself no longer. All other considerations were lost in the expectation of being seized by the officers.

"Let me out! let me out, I say!" he cried frantically.

This was an awkward *dénouement* for the lady of the house. Scraggs stamped and swore for very rage, and the woman became really alarmed; for she well knew the brutal violence of Scraggs, and had indeed compromised herself deeply with his imprisoned rival, consoling herself with the persuasion that she could easily soothe his anger and persuade him to anything, and certainly he would not, nay, he could not beat her; for she was more than a match for him, though Scraggs might do so, and probably would.

The bully unlocked the closet-door, and forth rushed the pale and trembling prisoner. Scraggs seizing him by the throat, kicked him down stairs, and in the fury of his wrath following him, threw him violently out at the entrance, and then left the house in a rage.

The lady had been greatly terrified and almost stupified by the violence of this unexpected scene, for she had calculated that Scraggs would have been persuaded to go away, leaving her free to explain the whole affair in her own way to Balders, not doubting but that she could once more cajole her cowardly dupe, as she had often done before, and by playing upon his fears induce him to leave the house quietly for his own sake ; and she was fully resolved never to admit him again.

But Balders in his terror had betrayed himself, and the subsequent brutal violence of Scraggs had baffled all her artifices. In her despair she had immediate recourse to the sovereign remedy for all the ills that

beset the ignorant and profligate, and some others too, who would disdain to be ranked with them, some of the more refined of whom disguise the fatal reality, under more specious forms and more euphonious names, and would be horrified to be thought capable of dram drinking.

The poor unhappy creature, of whom we now speak, had no such scruples ; but fearfully agitated, she exceeded her usual dose, which was sufficiently liberal, and was soon stretched upon her couch in that temporary oblivion of misery so welcome to the cast-away.

Balders meantime, maddened by his misfortunes, smarting under the vindictive violence of his ferocious rival, tremblingly alive as he had been to the fear of arrest, now forgot all in the bitter reflection, that he had heard the woman for whom he had sacrificed himself, of whose cajoleries he had been the dupe, and to whose extravagance he had administered, to his own utter ruin : he had

heard this woman excuse herself for having had anything to say to such a fool as he was, by pleading his lavish expenditure of money upon her, and all this to soothe his hated rival, the man who she had a thousand times sworn to him was the object of her scorn and dislike. This rankled in his craven breast. It was just at dusk that he had been so ignominiously cast out by Scraggs, from that house where he had so often been received with flattery and pretended affection, and he had observed that Scraggs had not re-entered it.

No one was near ; he lurked for some time in the neighbourhood, burning with impotent rage, and thirsting for revenge upon her who had been the cause of all his sufferings, and had now deserted, renounced, and most probably betrayed him.

He had no settled purpose, but the door stood invitingly open, as Scraggs had left it. He entered noiselessly, crept softly up the stairs, and, after a moment's pause, he entered

the room cautiously. All was still ; a single candle lighted the room faintly—as yet he had formed no plan, and had the wretched object of his wrath met him with the blandishments to which he was so accustomed to yield, she would most probably have triumphed over him once more, and had this failed, she would at least have had nothing to apprehend from him but bitter reproaches, for which she cared not. As for personal violence from Balders, she was more likely to inflict it than to receive it. But the wretched woman still lay in a deep and heavy sleep. She had thrown herself carelessly upon the couch ; her bonnet had been taken off, but she still retained her cloak ; her head not sufficiently supported by the stuffed end of the couch, had fallen back ; her face was, consequently flushed with one uniform deep colour ; her throat was bare, there was no power of resistance, no witness to betray him. The foul fiend worked upon his dastardly spirit : here was safe and easy vengeance.

He looked round for some weapon ; his eye rested upon a bright coloured silk handkerchief upon the floor, he recognised it as belonging to Scraggs. A diabolical thought seized him ; here was a double vengeance ! Scraggs was the last person known to have been there, for Balders whilst concealed had heard the milliner's girl, whose voice he well knew, and she had seen Scraggs, whose ferocious character was a matter of notoriety.

Balders left the unresisting victim of his cowardly vengeance a blackened corpse, with the silk handkerchief, which had belonged to Scraggs, tightly twisted round her throat.

He stole unobserved from the house and fled.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is an ungracious task to delineate vice and its never-failing consequence—misery, in all their rude unvarnished reality, tracing the dastardly but subtle knave, or the ruffling swaggerer, in their momentary prosperity, and forthwith in their steep downward path towards the destruction which sooner or later inevitably awaits them. But no painter of real life can hope to evade the stern necessity of doing this, for who that takes an active part in the world can escape from the painful necessity of witnessing vice and profligacy,

with all their appalling consequences, teaching us to shun, with loathing, every deviation from the straight and narrow path, whilst we turn with grateful hearts to our own peaceful home, however humble, with tenfold pleasure, as to an ark of safety, just as we now return to the pure atmosphere of Bewdley Cottage.

Once more we revel in calm domestic scenes, so exquisitely enjoyed by the hardy wanderer, to whom they have been long denied, and all the more valued here, for the slender tenure by which they are held from hour to hour. 'Tis as if we had entered another, a purer, a brighter world ; but earthly joys are transient, and Mrs. Rutherford was soon painfully reminded of this, for, before many weeks had passed away, Ralph received a letter from his old friend and patron, Captain Merivale, who was fitting out the 'Boadicea' at Sheerness, and entertained some hope that his second lieutenant would leave him to join an admiral who had just hoisted his flag.

This appointment to the 'Boadicea' was the very post Ralph most desired, but yet the announcement of its probability unsettled him. It was impossible not to feel for the trembling anxious mother, once more called upon to yield up the pride and delight of her heart to the perils of the sea and the chances of war. Her friend and young Edith had become attached to Ralph. His professional career had in their eyes been almost heroic; and Edith, who had at first looked with something like awe upon the tall and graceful stranger who had done such deeds, as she had heard spoken of with wonder and admiration by his mother and her own—the highest of authorities to her,—had been agreeably surprised to find him as kind, considerate, and gentle as Mrs. Rutherford herself. They were all now aware that his stay must be short, and his departure most probably sudden, which gave additional interest to their present intercourse; for Ralph's cheerfulness, good humour, and unwearied assiduity, enlivened their little society vastly.

At this time, Ralph received a packet from Jamaica, Mr. Carteret wrote most kindly, and told him that they had become greatly reconciled to his being in England, since they had now every reason to hope that they should all soon meet in the dear old country; for Uncle Peter, to their astonishment, had become urgent for the return of the family to England.

Shuldham's letters were long and interesting: we will quote the portion of them which bears most upon our story.

“That you should leave Jamaica without even seeing them, was much regretted, but our kind friends consoled themselves with the certainty that you would soon return. One only declined all consolation, lost her spirits, and became much less good-humoured than usual, for all which I greatly admired her; she became listless, indifferent to society, and the approach of the great ball so much talked of, ceased to interest her. She was not even disposed to go to it, but for the

acknowledged belle of the ball to absent herself without any plausible excuse was impossible. She declared, however, that she would not dance, nothing should make her dance, but what would her jealous rivals say, and what ill-natured causes would the Glossips and the Midges suggest for such a change? This being pressed upon her, she was obliged to give way, but waltz she declared she would not, let them say what they would. Indeed, she had been heard of late to speak disparagingly of the waltz. Once in the ball-room, the gay scene of former triumphs, habit, example, and the consciousness of general admiration, produced their inevitable effect: she became animated and danced divinely, nor was I surprised when I saw her later in the evening whirling in the giddy, graceful maze with your old friend, Lord George, amidst a general buzz of admiration.

“ I tell you this, lest it should reach you in some spiteful or exaggerated form: for I

have observed her closely, and I tell you, Rutherford, that there is not a more honest and true-hearted girl in existence. If you could have witnessed her regret for this innocent *escapade*, so natural to a lively and beautiful girl of seventeen, petted and indulged as she had always been, you would have loved her better than if it had never taken place; and then came your letter, announcing your sudden and unexpected return to England. But her grief, though silent, was intense; nor did she hold up her head again, until Uncle Peter suddenly proposed that the whole family should return to England forthwith; a change of opinion so extraordinary in him, that if it were possible to attribute a sufficiency of discriminating observation to the worthy old man, I should unhesitatingly attribute it to the pale countenance and languid step of his once joyous and buoyant favourite. Be that as it may, the preparations for returning to the old country have, in some degree, revived her

spirits ; but there is a firmness and gravity of manner, a care and caution in all she says and does, which denotes a permanent change. The gay and thoughtless girl has become at once a woman, as capable of deep thought as of strong feeling. I fear more for you than for her ; for I feel that the stern, unbending principle which forms so valuable a part of your character, if misapplied, may torture you and others. You will feel, that without very strong inducements, I should not address you in a tone so unusual with me. I owe you much, Ralph, and I love you much. I look up to your superior energy and judgment, yet can I view all this matter with a calmer and more reasonable eye than you can, for the wisest and firmest of men lose their judgment the moment their passions or their prejudices are roused. 'Tis then that a real friend, though his capacity may not be so enlarged, should have weight. Do not torment yourself, I beseech you, with imaginary grievances. Write cheerfully and confidently, and speak

of the return of the family to England as you ought to do. It would not be amiss to write a few lines to Uncle Peter, to congratulate him upon coming home."

Ralph Rutherford was far from being a monster of perfection. The finest points of his character, when carried to excess, degenerated into dangerous faults, pernicious to his own peace of mind, and injurious to others. Shuldham's letter tried him severely. Lord George's repeated and enthusiastic allusions to Julia's waltzing, had made, unhappily, a deep and durable impression upon him; and Ralph had studiously disparaged the dance to Julia, and clearly expressed his disapprobation of it. His vanity and self-esteem were now deeply wounded—Lord George had triumphed—the petted, wayward heiress had trampled upon his feelings; and he would not dispute with any man for the favour of a wilful girl, however beautiful: wherever there was a doubt or hesitation he would withdraw.

In a state of painful agitation, he could not meet the inquiring eye of that mother whose whole happiness depended upon him, and to whom a dark cloud on his countenance would be most painful, and the rather so, that she would bear it in silence. Feign tranquillity he would not, and could not. He sallied forth into the adjoining woods, tormenting himself with idle fancies, and stern resolutions, founded upon feelings at once ungenerous and unjust. His heart whispered that they were so, but in the perverseness of irritated pride he rejected the generous impulse.

“Am I,” he said, “to be the sport of a capricious girl? beautiful and attractive, it is true, but unstable, incapable of firm, consistent, and undeviating affection, a slave to vanity and flattery? Would Julia Carteret have been as faithful, constant, and unmoved under severe trials as was my incomparable mother?—and she was lovely, too.”

This was a most unprofitable train of

thought, and the views of his less gifted friend, Shuldham, were more just and rational; but Ralph succumbed to his evil genius, though he sought at last to appear calm and composed. On his return to the cottage, however, after an absence of unusual duration, Mrs. Rutherford was shocked to observe on his countenance, hitherto so open and unclouded, traces of his recent agitation; but Lady Evandale and Edith entered the cottage from the opposite direction almost at the same time, and diverted her attention.

“How strange it is,” said the former, so abruptly as to show that the communication had been the immediate object of her visit, “that the family at Jarnaica who owe so much to you, Mr. Rutherford, should prove to be connections of the Evandale family. I have never known them; but Edith has a letter from her uncle, the Prebend, telling her that the Carterets are coming to England. Mr. Carteret was the cousin, the schoolfellow, and attached friend of Sir Martin through

life, and Mr. Evandale speaks of their return with great pleasure.

“ I too,” said Ralph, “ have letters from Mr. Carteret to the same purport. I am most agreeably surprised to learn that they are connections of yours ; you will be delighted with your cousins, Edith.”

“ I am very sure I shall be,” answered Edith ; “ but do pray tell me is Julia so very lovely as my uncle says ? You know her well, and must describe her to me.”

This very natural curiosity of Edith’s was exceedingly perplexing to Ralph just at that moment. He coloured and stammered, and at length assured his young friend that Julia was a most lovely girl.

“ But I am sorry to say,” he added, “ I shall have little chance of seeing them, for I shall shortly be called away, and it may be long before I shall visit this dear cottage again.”

The gravity of his reply to Edith, and the evident discomposure with which he

approached the subject, were painfully felt by Mrs. Rutherford. There was a mystery in it which she could not solve; it was quite evident that Ralph was in high favour with the father—could the lovely Julia look coldly upon him? The fond mother raised her eyes and scanned the manly, graceful young officer, who had rendered that fair girl such a signal service. Her heart told her it could not be! wherefore then this sudden change evidently produced by his West Indian letters? The more she considered all this, the more she was perplexed.

Ralph saw and deeply regretted this. His mother possessed his entire confidence; but how would it be possible for him to speak upon such a subject even to her, much less to explain to her the subtle and in some degree imaginary web which circumstances had woven around him?

The announcement of a commission for the 'Boadicea,' with instructions to join her immediately at the Nore as she was ready

for sea, were accompanied by a note from Captain Merivale, stating that they were only waiting to receive a draft of men from a sloop-of-war in course of paying off. This hasty and peremptory call admitted of no delay ; a hasty farewell to his friends at the Lodge was all that time permitted. All minor considerations at home merged in the distress of this sudden separation ; for though not unexpected, it was most painfully sudden.

Ralph made a feeble attempt to console his weeping mother, by assuring her that, God willing, he would soon return to her with well-earned laurels. Alas ! this idea, so natural and so consoling to him, served only to bring before the mother's eyes in her present state of excitement, a fearful presage of the desperate means by which he meditated to accomplish such a result.

Embracing him almost convulsively, as if she had felt that she should never see him again, she drew from her finger a plain gold

ring with a remarkably beautiful single pearl set in it.

“ You know how fondly I have cherished this,” she said, as she passed it upon his little finger ; “ let it remind you, when tempted to be rash, that more than one life is at stake, and never I beseech you part with it but to one worthy of you and of me—one worthy of him who gave it to me.”

Ralph was too much agitated by the almost solemn tone in which this was said to reply. He could only return his mother’s embrace, and in an instant the rattle of wheels was heard, bearing him away to new dangers.

The bereaved widow was once more the sole inhabitant of the cottage, and what a painful void would Ralph’s absence create, now that she had been accustomed to have him with her.

He was gone too with an aching heart, and she the mother he so tenderly loved was

not even his confidant. It was a bitter thought; but she blamed him not. She retired to seek consolation in prayer, and to crave God's blessing on her boy.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SOLITARY journey when a man is thoroughly, dissatisfied with himself, is by no means agreeable, but a journey to Sheerness, or even an arrival there, in those days would have damped the most joyous spirit. The old ‘Marlborough Head,’ the dullest of inns in the dullest of garrisons, was detestable. All around as far as the eye could reach from the ramparts, and very much farther, was marsh, bordered by a narrow shingly beach on the Nore side, whilst the banks of the dark turbid river consisted of a blue soapy

tenacious mud. The communications (for roads they were not) were high banks of great breadth and strength, sloping upwards until they terminated in a mere pathway, upon which in high winds it was not easy to preserve a footing, especially when they were wet, as the whole soil partook more or less of slippery clay. The dockyard occupied, with the garrison, all the available space between the sea and the river for a considerable distance above the river's mouth. Bluetown, a wretched collection of wooden tenements, which looked as if they had been constructed of materials borrowed from Her Majesty's Dockyard, which was probably the case, with the exception of two or three brick buildings occupied by the principal tradesmen, was bordered by deep and wide ditches without any protection for passengers — dangerous enough where drunkenness was so fearfully prevalent. There was no easy communication between the garrison and Bluetown, but by passing through the dockyard, which

being thus made a thoroughfare, ways and means for the construction of the before-mentioned suspicious-looking tenements were amply afforded; but the most singular feature of this unique place, upon which millions have been lavished, was a tier of old ships of war hauled up on the land, supported there by piles and shores, and converted into dwellings, each deck forming a street with a passage down its centre.

Such was Sheerness in those days, and so insuperable are the natural obstacles arising from its position and the nature of the soil—a loose blue mud, over which boundless expenditure has only served to spread a thin crust or artificial surface, that it never can be very much better.

All this, first seen on a cold, raw winter's day, was disagreeable enough, though very strange. Ralph, who had occasion to visit the shops of Bluetown, saw it all with amazement. He was not perhaps in a humour to have been pleased with an earthly paradise,

and certainly he did imbibe a rooted prejudice against Sheerness, and was infinitely relieved when he found himself on board the 'Boadicea,' where his eye could rest with pleasure on decks scrupulously clean ; order, regularity, usefulness, but no inlaid brass, like French cabinet-work, no gilding, no trumpery misplaced ornaments. When he looked aloft as a seaman loves to do, all was as it should be, but no sacrifice of utility to show. The boats too were in beautiful order, the men scrupulously clean and orderly, but with the cheerful look which to the practised eye speaks volumes.

He was joyfully received by Captain Merivale, who told him they had unexpectedly received orders to proceed to Elsinore, to reinforce a large convoy of ships, laden with naval stores and corn, to the safety of which great importance was attached, bread being almost at famine price, and naval stores greatly wanted.

" I had expected," said the Captain, " a

cruise to the westward. How will you, red-hot from the West Indies, stand North-sea work in the winter?"

The draft of men was received on the following morning, and the wind being fair, they weighed and ran down the Swin. It was the beginning of December, but with a light westerly wind, the cold was not severe.

Ralph in charge of a watch, and of half the main deck guns, found his duties light. Indeed, he had more leisure than was advantageous to him in his present state of mind. Read he could not, for it was impossible to withdraw his thoughts from the contents of Shuldham's letters. He had written to Mr. Carteret, but not to Shuldham: he could not. He was displeased with himself for having thus neglected his devoted friend, who he knew would feel it severely; but he *could not* write to him: which, being interpreted, means that he would not; but 'tis thus we deceive ourselves with our own prejudices.

In looking around him amidst his new

associates, he saw nothing that promised to be very congenial, though they were pleasant and good-humoured men. Burchall, the first Lieutenant, was a rough, noisy, facetious fellow at the mess-table, though efficient upon deck ; but the most attractive of the party was the marine officer, a grave and rather reserved-looking Highlander, about his own age. Donald Macdonald was not tall, but remarkably well put together, perhaps rather too square built and angular for an Adonis. His countenance was open, and when he smiled, prepossessing. The whole man struck Ralph's fancy strongly. His advances were cordially received, and they soon became great friends ; for Macdonald's good qualities were of a kind to improve upon acquaintance.

The wind freshened, and anxious to make the most of it, a heavy press of sail was carried night and day. Ralph, in one dark squally middle watch, became dissatisfied with the helmsman, and after once or twice speaking to him hailed the forecastle.

"Send a man aft that can steer," he said, impatiently.

The man at the wheel was instantly relieved. Ralph was struck with the ease and dexterity of the new helmsman.

"What's your name, my fine fellow?" he said. "I like your steerage very much."

"My name is Ben Buntline, Sir," replied the helmsman, in a voice, which though disguised, appeared familiar to Ralph. He looked at the man, but it was very dark, and his hat was pressed down almost to his eyes.

"One of the new men, Sir, what came in the draft from the 'Swallow,'" said the quartermaster, "and there a'nt the match of him in the ship at helm or lead."

Ralph felt much interested about the man, whose voice seemed so familiar, but whose name was utterly unknown to him, and next day resolved to see who he was. Being off duty, he sent for him.

"Surely, my lad," said he, "you and I must have sailed together, and yet I do not

recollect your name, and I am satisfied you are not a man to be forgotten."

Poor Ben had held down his head to conceal his countenance, but he now raised it, and fixing his eyes respectfully upon his officer, shook his head mournfully. Ralph absolutely started.

"Yes, Sir," resumed Ben, "it is really me. You are the sailor's friend, Mr. Rutherford—you know me ; let me tell you my story. I never thought of deserting, no more than the child as is unborn."

"Come aft to the taffrail," said Ralph, deeply grieved and astonished, "and I will hear you ; little did I ever think to see Jack Brady thus."

Ben told the history of his having been kidnapped, as coxswain of the 'Galatea's' pinnace, in the manner which we have circumstantially described.

"When I awoke, or rather recovered my senses, Sir, I was lying, with three others, in the half deck of a South Seaman, rowling down

the Channel before an easterly gale. At first I thought it might be a dream, but when I had shook myself, and rubbed my eyes, and looked about me, I seed how it was, for I had heard of such things in our forecandle yarns. You know'd, Sir, what I was in the 'Galatea'—there warn't nowhere a happier fellow, and now I was a vagabond in rags. My berth, my character, my kit, were all gone; my pay and prize money, my hopes of promotion, were all gone. I was a deserter. I was afraid to own even my own name—was frightened at the idea of meeting an old shipmate; I, who had never feared to look any man in the face—and my poor father, what would become of him?"

"Why did you not write to your Captain, or to some officer of the 'Galatea,' on the first opportunity, and state what had happened to you?"

"I knew, Sir, that she was to sail immediately, with an East India convoy, and it

was long before I had an opportunity of writing, and then 'twarnt o' no use."

"But how came you here, my poor fellow?"

"They behaved very well to me aboard the South Seaman; they gave me clothes, and made me a sort of an officer; but in about two months after, I was pressed from her into the 'Swallow,' under the name of Ben Buntline; two of the men there knowed me, but I knew they wouldn't say anything. Still, Sir, I led a miserable life, expecting every day to be taken up for a deserter. I heard the first Lieutenant of the 'Swallow' say to another officer, 'If that young fellow a'nt a regular man-o'-war's-man, I never saw one.' 'To be sure he is,' said the other, 'and that's a regular purser's name he's got;'" and when I was told I was to come here, I was properly scared; but as soon as I seed you, Sir, I made up my mind to out with it all to you, and now my mind's at ease:

depend upon it, Sir, I never thought of deserting, no more than yourself, Sir."

"I believe you, Brady, and I will get you justice; but I must have time to consider what steps to take; so make yourself easy. Do all you can to show them what you are. The Captain has a sharp eye; he'll soon see that you are no half-and-half long-shore grass comber."

Poor Jack Brady, or rather as we must call him, Ben Buntline, was once more a happy man. He had implicit confidence in Ralph, and perhaps over-rated his power. Once more he held his head erect—once more he was foremost when anything important was to be done—once more he was the life and spirit of the crew, many of whom, no doubt, knew him well.

Hitherto the 'Boadicca' had proceeded with a steady fair wind, and by carrying a press of sail they had made the most of it; but as they approached their port, they were threatened with a change of wind. Every

effort was made, and the ship was scarcely anchored, when a gale from the north-east came thundering down upon them. The intense cold of those winds, in such a latitude, in December, is frightful. The roadstead was already crowded with many hundred sail of vessels, of all sizes and of many countries; whilst this sudden change of wind, which now blew down the Baltic Sea, was continually bringing down more vessels from all the leading Baltic ports, to avail themselves of the last convoy of the year: and as it was of the utmost importance to do this, many of them had put to sea in a very imperfect state of equipment, to avail themselves of a fair wind, whilst they were yet free to do so, for the rapid increase of cold threatened to freeze them up, and to fix them where they were till the following spring, an event which would be ruinous to owners, shippers of cargo, and underwriters, and most repugnant to the crews.

The gale had now set in; it increased

during the night, with heavy snow squalls, and, on the following day, the number of vessels continually running before the gale for the anchorage, created constant alarms, and some serious accidents happened.

The roadstead of Elsinore is a sort of basin, at one end of which is a comparatively wide passage, connecting it with the Baltic Sea. The Danish and Swedish shores here approach within a few miles of each other, forming the strait, whilst at the other extremity of the roadstead exists a somewhat similar strait, which leads, through the Cattegat, into the German Ocean. Elsinore lying in a sort of bight, the projecting points on the Danish shore, rapidly jutting out to form these passages, affords shelter for a large number of ships; but the range of safe anchorage extends no further than the point at which the mouth of the respective passages is closed, or nearly so, by these projecting points of land; and this space had now

become so crowded with shipping, that it was every moment more difficult for new-comers, flying before the gale, to find a sheltered berth, in which they could safely anchor.

“Some of these vessels, Sir,” observed Rutherford to Captain Merivale, “do not appear to be in condition for a winter’s passage across the North Sea, with only six hours of daylight, without reckoning the fogs, so frequent and so dense.

“It is awful to think of,” replied the Captain, “and with blocks, ropes, and sails all frozen, as well as half their men, ’tis a fearful prospect for them, and for us who have to take charge of them. But here comes a large foreign ship, flying before the squall. She will plunge into this disorderly crowd of vessels, in the desperate hope of finding some vacant spot in which she may have room to bring up, and anchor with safety.”

“And that’s no easy matter, Sir,” said the

first Lieutenant ; “ but anchor she must, and quickly too, for she is fast approaching a rocky lee shore.”

“ She’s trying it,” observed the Captain, “ and if her ground tackle is good, she’s safe, for there’s no fear of a foul anchor with so much way upon her.”

The officers of the frigate watched with deep interest, vessel after vessel flying before the gale, under bare poles, whilst the practised eye of each ship master calmly and fearlessly sought for some sufficiently open space amongst the throng in which he might anchor, measuring, with rapid glance, the distance between ship and ship, as he was unwillingly borne on by the resistless gale in his headlong course towards the foam-covered rocky shore ahead of him, scanning with ever-increasing anxiety the rapidly decreasing space which still lay between him and absolute destruction. He must anchor promptly, but well he knew that any material error in guessing his distance, or any accidental hang-

ing of the anchor, when the order "*Let go the anchor,*" should have been given, and the ship rounded-to in the chosen spot, must be full of danger to herself, and to those vessels immediately to leeward of her; whilst, even with all these difficulties overcome, should the anchor hold, and the ship be safely brought up in a clear berth, her position would be an obstacle to other vessels in pursuit of the same object, the difficulty of attaining which was, of course, continually increasing, as the anchorage became more and more densely crowded. Vessels were continually rushing past, or anchoring so near as to endanger the ship, and even should her own anchor hold on during these furious squalls, that of some other ship anchored ahead might give way, and the unfortunate sufferer, driving across her hawse, would most probably cripple her, perhaps dismast her, and break her adrift, to escape the lee shore as best she might.

The attention of the officers of the 'Boa-

dicea' was continually occupied in observing the hairbreadth escapes and occasional casualties of the new comers, and the unlucky vessels with which they sometimes came into rude contact, and in rendering assistance to sufferers when possible.

"That deep-laden brig must be thwart hawse of the large foreign ship. No, she's clear of her—she's brought up, and her anchor holds: the ship's jib-boom is gone though—'twas a narrow shave!"

Thus spoke the first Lieutenant of the 'Boadicea' to his Captain, as they walked the deck, watching the scene around.

"'Tis sad work," replied the Captain. "Hark! there is another crash in the centre of the fleet. The shouts and outcries rise above the storm."

"Yonder vessels," observed Rutherford, "locked together, and driving broadside on for the rocks, must go on shore; but, thank God! it is daylight and we may save the crews."

“No,” said the Captain; “the larger of the two has brought up—they are clear of each other, and the smaller one is coming head to wind astern of her. They may both ride it out yet.”

Such were the scenes constantly occurring as fresh ships were continually pouring down into the roadstead, nor was it always possible to render assistance beyond rescuing the crews in extreme cases, and this was often a service of great difficulty and danger, and too often attended with incomplete success; for many of the poor cast-away men, worn out and frost-bitten, were washed overboard and lost, having been incapable of making the slightest effort to second the exertions of those who were risking their lives to save them; for these north-east gales pierced through those exposed to them, chilling the very blood in the veins, although when the wind moderated the cold was endurable enough; still officers and men not only readily volunteered for these desperate ser-

vices, but disputed with each other priority of claim to be selected for them. Such scenes ceased with the cessation of monster convoys at the return of peace; but some few yet survive who bore an active part in them, and will feel how much more awful was the reality than the description. The short and gloomy day closed amidst frightful collisions and hair-breadth escapes imperfectly seen.

Every possible preparation had been made for the safety of the 'Boadicea' through the long and stormy night now closing in upon the huge fleet. All was ready for veering, slipping, or for cutting the cable by which they rode, with a long scope. The small bower and sheet-anchors were clear and the cables ranged, the top-gallant masts and flying jib-boon were on deck, the yards pointed to the wind, the boats were ready for service, and a quarter-watch was set. Such was the report of the first Lieutenant to Captain Merivale.

“ Very good, Mr. Birchall,” said the Captain, “ we have nothing to apprehend for ourselves ; but it will be a trying night for some of these ill-found and weak-handed merchant ships, especially for some of those last arrived, one or two of which, fearful of entering the throng just at dark, have anchored so far out that I doubt whether they will be sufficiently sheltered by the point of land to windward of them. One brig is certainly in a dangerous berth. It is not a little provoking, Mr. Birchall, to be losing such a fair wind as this, so late in the season too, but there is no help for it. The Commodore is tied down by positive instructions to remain here, if possible, for the last ship.”

“ I wish, Sir, we were a little more in-shore, in the Commodore’s wake, for so many of those vessels ahead and to windward of us are frequently driving at their anchors, or parting their cables, that sooner or later we shall have some of them in our hawse, in despite of all we can do.”

“It is but too probable, Mr. Birchall. See that we have lifelines and howline knots ready forward to save men from the wrecks, and a good stout spar or two ready for booming vessels off. Let the youngster of the watch be sent to me from time to time to report the state of the weather that the officer of the watch may not quit the deck, and let Mr. Rutherford be told that I want him.”

Captain Merivale left to himself, paced up and down his cabin in a state of considerable agitation.

“’Tis strange, ’tis incomprehensible,” he said. “Rutherford must explain his conduct to my entire satisfaction. I have ever had great confidence in him; but his present proceedings—” he resumed his walk in moody silence.

The storm roared furiously, but he thought not of that, he heeded it not, the incomprehensible conduct of one he thought so highly of occupied all his thoughts.

Ralph entered the cabin in obedience to his summons ; but the Captain, who appeared lost in reverie, did not immediately address him, and just as he was about to speak a young midshipman entered from the deck, and as he did so the wind roared through the open door dismally.

“ Only a bit of a squall, Sir,” said the boy. “ We see through it, so we’ve got the worst of it ; but it’s brewing up again very black to windward, Sir, worse than ever.”

“ Tell the officer of the watch to report by you any material change. Have you seen any ships adrift lately ?”

“ No, Sir, not one for the last half-hour. The late squalls have been more off the land ; but it’s very dark, and between that and the thick snow squalls we can’t see very far.”

“ Humph !” muttered the Captain, as the youngster closed the door, “ an intelligent stripling that. He may make a good officer in time, but he’ll need the curb ;” then as if suddenly recollecting himself he turned to

Ralph with a countenance not quite so courteous and confiding as usual. "Be seated, Mr. Rutherford," he said mildly, but the 'Mr.' grated harshly on Ralph's ear—he was not used to it from his old patron, and he felt it.

"We were interrupted this morning, when you were about to explain to me the case of the seaman, Buntline. It is a matter of great importance Mr. Rutherford, for you have been harbouring a deserter in my ship, knowing him to be such, without having, as our laws require, immediately reported him to me. I can conceive no justification of such a course of proceeding in violation of the Articles of War, but I have known you long and well, and I will listen to what you have to urge in justification. There is a lull just now after that squall, and this is a business which brooks no delay. But you must be concise."

"Ben Buntline, Sir," replied Ralph, considerably agitated, "or rather Jack Brady

was the best seaman, and the most valuable petty officer in the 'Galatea,' and you know Captain Merivale what the 'Galatea' is. He was coxswain of the pinnace, ever foremost in difficulty or in danger on board, and wholly trustworthy on shore. Judge, Sir, what my astonishment must have been to find the Jack Brady I had left not a year since so highly and so justly valued in the 'Galatea,' serving here as Ben Buntline. I positively started with surprise when I recognised him. I took him aside to question him, for I could scarcely credit the evidence of my senses. How could I conceive it to be possible that Jack Brady should have deserted from the 'Galatea;' yet there he stood, and the change of name vouched for the fact. He saw my astonishment. 'I am a wretched man, Mr. Rutherford,' he said, despondingly, 'but not a guilty one; I never dreamed of deserting. The sight of you here is a blessing to me, for you, I know, will hear me and believe me. Do not think ill of me till you have

.

heard my story. I place myself in your hands: all I shall tell you can be easily proved.' ”

The wind roared awfully, and the same youngster re-entered the cabin.

“ It blows furiously, Sir,” he said, “ but it is only a squall. The dark threatening clouds to windward rise slowly, but they are very heavy.” And he retired.

“ Proceed,” said the Captain. “ We shall never get through this story if we suffer every trifle to interrupt it.”

Ralph related, as clearly and concisely as he could, all the circumstances relating to the drugging and kidnapping of poor Brady, already before the reader, and then continued:

“ Stripped of all that could make life valuable to him, through the villany of a crimp, he had become an outcast, a *Deserter*, quailing under the gaze of every stranger, fearing still more the face of an old acquaintance. I knew the man well, Sir, and never did the possessor of rank and wealth suddenly

ruined and degraded, feel it more acutely, than did this brave and high-spirited seaman feel the bitterness of his lot. Perfectly satisfied of the truth of his story, I was not so well satisfied that we could prove its truth, as he appeared to be, for the 'Galatea' had sailed for India. To recognise a deserter without at once denouncing him, was to compromise myself, but I was convinced of Brady's truthfulness, and satisfied that he was not a deserter, though I felt that I should find it difficult to prove my view of the case. I knew too the practices of these vile crimps, who prey upon our seamen like sharks, and deeply injure the best interests of the country."

He hesitated: the storm without raged fearfully, but the cool, the ever self-possessed Merivale heard it not. He was deeply moved, but he did not speak, and Ralph resumed:

"An officer, Captain Merivale, has, and no one recognises it more fully than you do, a duty to perform towards his subordinates as

well as towards his superiors. Believing firmly that Brady is an innocent and injured man, to whom protection is due, not punishment, I have taken time to consider what might be my real duty in this extraordinary case. By so doing, it is true, I have materially violated the letter of an important article of war. I place myself in your hands, Captain Merivale. I do not repent of the course I have pursued, and if I cannot justify it, I shall bow with bitter regret, but with an unscathed conscience, to the sentence of a Court Martial, which may perhaps deprive me of my commission, and blight my future prospect in life, but I shall not have deserved to forfeit your good opinion."

Captain Merivale had listened with deep attention. He rose from his seat, when Ralph ceased, and began to pace up and down the cabin in a painful state of agitation.

Ralph arose too, his countenance glowing with the generous conviction that he had done his duty. He did not regret that he

had perilled his dearly valued commission, and all his professional aspirations. He thought only of poor Brady, and rejoiced in the effort he had made to save him, but he awaited with intense anxiety the first words of Merivale. A strict disciplinarian, tenacious of the very letter of the law, but just and generous: the pace, the manner, the agitation of the man, were all foreign to his habits.

“Young man,” at length he said, stopping suddenly in front of Ralph, “you have been severely tried. I hope and trust, that had I been so tried, I should have done as you have done. I take my stand with you in this matter, for I entertain no doubt of Brady’s innocence, and he shall have ample means to prove it. Draw up a statement of the case as clearly and concisely as you can. I will forward it to the Admiralty, with my own comments. The whole affair shall be thoroughly investigated. It may lead to important discoveries. Tell your protégé this, Rutherford,” and he shook Ralph cordially

by the hand, "that if, as I believe, he is innocent, he has nothing to fear, but, on the contrary, shall receive ample justice."

Most gratefully did these words fall upon Ralph's ear, enhanced as they were by Merivale's tone and manner to himself. That an officer of Merivale's rank, experience, and reputation, should have stamped his conduct throughout this difficult affair with the high sanction of his approbation in such terms as Merivale had used, was not merely a relief to his anxiety, but a gratification of the highest kind; and honest Jack Brady had now a protector both powerful and generous, which he had much needed, as all the evidence in his favour was far beyond his reach.

Ralph lost not one moment in communicating to Brady the joyful intelligence, for having learnt that Ralph was in close conference with the Captain, at such a time, he had suspected that he was himself the subject of it, and had been waiting the issue most anxiously.

“May God for ever bless you, Mr. Rutherford,” he said on hearing the result, whilst tears of joy ran down his manly face, “You were always the Sailor’s friend.”

And they had both for the moment totally forgotten the storm, which raged around. Circumstances, however, soon roused them to a full sense of its fury, and of its doubtful effects.

END OF VOL. I.

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